United Nations E/1999/53

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
18 May 1999

Original: English

Substantive session of 1999
Geneva, 5–30 July 1999
Item 2 of the provisional agenda*
The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women

The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women

Report of the Secretary-General

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
	Introduction	1–6	3
I.	The linkages between the changing face of poverty and new forms of employment	7–26	4
	A. The relationship between employment and poverty	10–14	4
	B. Feminization of poverty	15–21	5
	C. Emerging forms of employment and poverty	22–24	6
	D. The skills gap	25–26	8
II.	Policy issues	27–79	9
	A. Macroeconomic policies and poverty alleviation	28–38	9
	1. The central role of growth	29–33	10
	2. The design of policies for employment-intensive growth	34–36	11
	3. Reducing vulnerability to short-term shocks and mobilization of resources	37–38	12

* E/1999/100

99-14945 (E) 070699

B.	Improving market outcomes	39–45	12
	1. Labour markets: do they include or exclude the poor, especially women?	40–42	12
	2. Informal and non-standard employment	43–45	13
C.	The role of public policies	46–62	13
	1. The role of public expenditures on human development in poverty eradication	47–49	14
	2. Gender-sensitive public policies for employment promotion and poverty eradication	50–57	14
	3. Extending social protection through social safety nets	58–62	16
D.	Rights and voice	63–72	17
E.	Policies at the international level	73–78	19
F.	Partnership with the civil society and the private sector	79	20
III.	Poverty eradication, a one-world problem: an agenda for action	80–89	20
A.	The national context: the need for renewed and specific political commitments	82–85	21
B.	The multilateral system: strengthening national capacities for poverty eradication	86–87	22
C.	The international community: enhanced development cooperation	88–89	23

Introduction

1. In addressing the theme "The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women", the present report focuses on the interrelationship between employment, poverty eradication and gender equality. The report has been prepared by the International Labour Organization (ILO), with contributions by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

2. There is a wide consensus on the central role of remunerative employment in poverty reduction, as reflected by the emphasis placed on it in major international conferences and particularly in the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen. The Social Summit's commitment 3, contained in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development[1] stated that the heads of State and Government committed themselves "to promoting the goal of full employment as a basic priority of our economic and social policies, and to enabling all men and women to attain secure and sustainable livelihoods through freely chosen productive employment and work".

3. At the Social Summit, Governments committed themselves to achieving equality and equity between women and men. The Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995, identified as a priority to "review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty" (Platform for Action, strategic objective A.1)[2] Moreover, it emphasized the need to "develop gender-based methodologies and conduct research to address the feminization of poverty" (Strategic objective A.4).[3] More recently, the Economic and Social Council itself resolved to promote a coordinated and coherent policy of gender mainstreaming and urged that "issues across all areas of (United Nations) activity should be defined in such a manner that gender differences can be diagnosed".[4] This report attempts to integrate this approach into its analysis.

4. The relationship between poverty and employment lies in the extent to which income generated from employment permits workers and their dependants to obtain goods and services necessary to meet minimum needs. Poverty reduction thus calls for the creation of regular and good-quality jobs in the labour market. The interlocking problems of poverty and employment differ between different groups and particularly between women and men. Even in the same socio-economic setting, women and men become impoverished through different processes and face different opportunities and constraints in accessing the labour market. Therefore, a successful poverty reduction strategy must address both broad socio-economic and gender-specific policy issues.

5. The lack of economic opportunities for the poor and inherent economic and societal biases against women have acquired new urgency with the accelerating pace and impact of globalization and liberalization. Policies are needed that protect the poor and vulnerable groups from the volatility of the global economy. Otherwise, the adverse consequences of growing insecurity can quickly outweigh the potential benefits that new markets and opportunities afford for world development and human progress. The recurrent and persistent economic crises of recent years, particularly the Asian experience, serve only to underline the urgency of the challenge facing national and international policy makers in addressing the problems of poverty, employment and gender equality.

6. The report aims to demonstrate the role of employment creation in poverty eradication, taking into account the processes of impoverishment, the new types of vulnerability and

insecurity and the differential impact of these processes on women and men. In the light of key current issues in poverty, employment and gender, it proposes policies for employment growth and poverty reduction, to promote a consensus by the United Nations system on priorities and an agenda for both national and international action.

I. The linkages between the changing face of poverty and new forms of employment

7. During the last half century, humanity has achieved historically unprecedented advances in nutrition, health, education, life expectation and reduction in material poverty. National experiences differ and vary over time but advancements have generally benefited people in both developed and developing countries. People in the developing world have recorded historically unprecedented economic and social progress between 1950 and 1990.

8. Despite this dramatic progress, the global challenge of poverty remains. Over 1.5 billion people still live on less than $1 per day, and the number of absolute poor continues to grow. There are close to 1 billion adults unable to read or write, most of whom are women. Three quarters of a billion people have no access to health services. Malnutrition affects over 800 million people. Many millions lack access to safe water and many millions more have a life expectancy of less than 40 years. The greatest number of people below the poverty line live in Asia, but the depth of poverty, which measures how far incomes fall below the poverty line, is greater in sub-Saharan Africa than in any other region

9. Moreover, the face of poverty is changing: in the next century, a poor person is less likely to be a male smallholder in rural Asia and more likely to be an unskilled, low-wage female worker in urban Africa or Latin America. In addition, child labour remains a serious problem in the poverty agenda today. According to ILO estimates, the number of fully working children between ages 5 and 14 is at least 120 million, or about 250 million if those for whom work is a secondary activity are included. A large number of them work in occupations and industries that are plainly dangerous and hazardous.

A. The relationship between employment and poverty

10. Employment contributes to poverty reduction and promotes equality between women and men. It is, however, important to review at the outset the conditions under which employment has a positive impact on well-being and equality. First, the rate of growth of overall employment must be sufficient to absorb new entrants into the labour force in productive and remunerative work, as well as take care of existing unemployment and underemployment. Second, employment creation should result in the equitable distribution of jobs between those below and above poverty incomes for individuals and families. Third, employment, should, apart from being productive, be linked to a social wage and the enforcement of core labour standards, to ensure adequate remuneration and social protection and decent working conditions. The above-mentioned imply the existence of the right type of macro-economic framework; labour-market and social policies; and efficient labour-market institutions, designed to facilitate equal access to gainful and decent employment for men and women. There is convincing empirical evidence across countries and in different regions of the world that employment does have a direct and positive impact on poverty.

11. In industrialized countries, the lowering of the rate of unemployment is usually poverty-reducing. The exception would be in cases where the decline in unemployment

comes as a result of an expansion in low-paid work that does not provide incomes high enough to lift the workers concerned out of poverty.

12. In developing countries, this presumption does not necessarily hold since the rate of open unemployment is a poor indicator of what the level and incidence of poverty are. This is because regular wage employment is not the dominant mode of employment in developing countries. Instead, the majority of the employed are in some form of self-employment (smallholder farming, petty production in the informal sector). There is considerable underutilization of labour and the returns to work are often insufficient to stave off poverty. For these workers, economic adversity is absorbed through a fall in income, increased work and increased underemployment, and not open unemployment. Moreover, in the absence of unemployment benefits, very few workers, even those in regular wage employment, can afford to remain unemployed. In all these cases, deterioration in employment conditions and a rise in poverty will not be captured in the rate of unemployment.

13. In view of the above, from the standpoint of poverty alleviation, the relevant indicators of changes in employment conditions should include changes in the degree of underemployment (the number of days of work that are available and the earnings from such work) and in the extent of disguised unemployment. Moreover, given that the problem of low-paid wage-employment looms much larger in developing countries than in industrialized countries, even the expansion of wage employment need not automatically lead to a reduction in poverty.

14. It follows from the above that employment growth will be poverty-reducing, only if it is associated with a rapid rate of increase in wage employment that yields incomes above the poverty line *and* a significant reduction in the incidence of underemployment and disguised unemployment. An example of poverty-reducing employment growth occurred in some East Asian countries in the decades before the present crisis. A contrary example would be sub-Saharan Africa in the past two decades where employment growth has been largely in the urban informal sector and in rural self-employment.

B. Feminization of poverty

15. Generally, the link between employment and poverty has been weaker for women than men mainly because of discrimination and disadvantage faced by women in the labour and asset markets. The empowerment and advancement of women in society would therefore largely depend on whether or not the gender gap in wage and employment has been closing. Gender differences in poverty analysis thus merit special attention.

16. Poverty appears to be disproportionately female, to the point that strategies to combat gender inequalities would need to be central to successful poverty reduction. Evidence based on some indicators of the gender gap for different regions shows that for developing countries as a whole the adult literacy rate is 16 percentage points higher for men than for women; female school enrolment — even at the primary level — is 13 per cent lower than male enrolment; and women's share of earned income is a third of the total.[5] Women are more likely to fall into poverty because they continue to encounter discrimination across the board, in education and training, and in employment and earnings.

17. Around the world, women on average earn about two thirds of average male wages. The wage gap is attributable to several factors: lower human capital, job discrimination and wage discrimination. In general, about one third of the wage gap is due to differences in education, work experience and other variables related to qualifications, marital status and

hours of work. The remaining two thirds of the wage gap between women and men cannot be explained or justified by such differences.

18. Women also remain more likely than men to do work that is not recognized in the System of National Accounts, 1993,[6] principally unpaid housework and caring. Typically, women work 30–40 additional hours a week doing housework, compared with 5–15 hours for men. If all of women's work both in the labour market and in the home were included in national accounts, global gross national product (GNP) could increase by as much as 25 per cent.

19. Another important factor to be taken into account is that women's labour force participation has not only increased, but also come to dominate labour-force growth in many countries. Women have provided the bulk of new labour supply in both developed and developing countries over the past two decades. ILO employment data show that women's labour-force growth since 1980 has been substantially higher than that for men for every region of the world except Africa. Moreover, in most parts of the world, a high share of total labour-force growth is due to the growth of women's employment.

20. While this trend would appear to reflect the closing of the gender gap in employment, the new and enlarged role of women in the labour market has not always been an entirely positive development for women. They do not have equal access to better jobs that would give them opportunities for career advancement. Indeed, the increase in women's employment has not been matched by increase in quality of employment available to women. Typically, more women than men are found in the expansion of the informal sector and precarious forms of employment, such as dependent home-based work or temporary or casual employment. In export-oriented sectors, and particularly in the export processing zones (EPZs), employment has been primarily, if not exclusively, female because of the cheaper wages and the unorganized nature of the workforce often associated more with female, than with male, labour. Nevertheless, EPZs have opened up opportunities for wage employment for women, thereby increasing their employability as well as improving their position in the household.

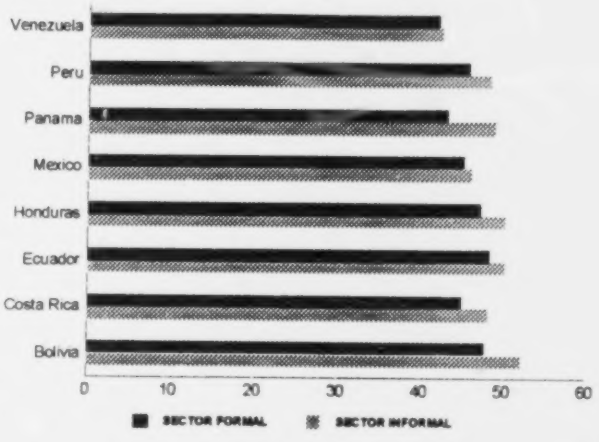
21. In most countries, women are perceived to remain more loosely attached to the labour force than men. In order to accommodate their role in caring for the family, many women work shorter hours than men and for shorter periods, with greater interruptions in labour force participation. Furthermore, there are fewer women than men in higher-level and decision-making positions. Occupational segmentation by sex not only cuts across different levels of economic development, but is also evident across a wide spectrum of political, social, religious and cultural groups. This horizontal and vertical segmentation implies an underutilization of human resources; labour-market rigidity; and male-female wage differentials, hence lower income levels.

C. Emerging forms of employment and poverty

22. The informal sector serves as a buffer against unemployment in times of economic downturn, allowing an increasing share of the population to earn a livelihood from the sector rather than stay openly unemployed with no income. The sector has also played a key role in cushioning the adverse impact of economic crises. During the past two decades, informal sector employment has increased throughout the developing world, and more women than men have entered the sector. However, employment in the sector is characterized by low levels of productivity and income, and jobs could be precarious.

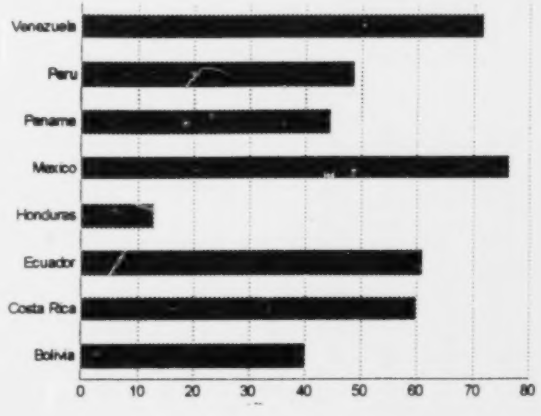
23. Data on earnings in 1996 for a representative group of countries in Latin America reveal that average earnings of informal sector workers were half of those of blue-collar and white-collar workers in modern sector establishments. Furthermore, working hours were longer for informal sector workers (figures I and II). It is likely, given the large number of women in the informal sector in this region, that the burden and negative effects of longer working hours affected women (in addition to the burden of domestic work) more severely than men.

Figure I. Informal sector workers: weekly hours worked (Average)



Source: International Labour Organization, *Labour Overview 1996* (Geneva, 1996).

Figure II. Remuneration per hour: informal sector/formal sector (Percentage)



Source: International Labour Organization, *Labour Overview, 1996* (Geneva, 1996).

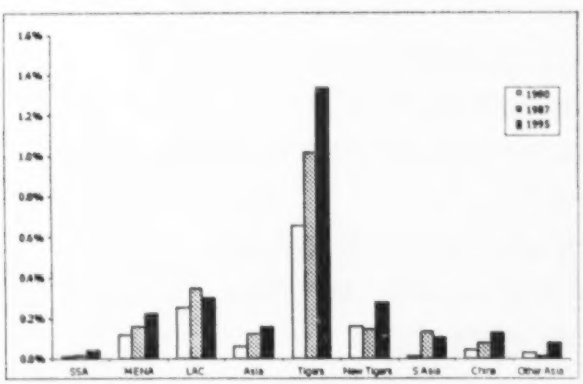
24. The past two decades have witnessed the emergence of "non-standard" forms of work in some sectors, which used to be characterized by regular wage employment. Among these, the most important numerically have been part-time employment and temporary work. They usually offer lower levels of social security coverage and of employment rights than regular jobs. Part-time and temporary work is also usually associated with lower wages and limited training opportunities or career prospects. Many forms of non-standard jobs expose women and men to employment and income insecurity, and pose a real risk of marginalization in the labour market. Though non-standard or sub-standard temporary and casual work is preferred by some workers because of its flexible hours and greater compatibility with family responsibility, for many others it may not be compatible with their employment needs and aspirations.

D. The skills gap

25. The World Bank's ***World Development Report 1998/99: Knowledge for Development***[7] has highlighted the role of knowledge in development by comparing the diverging growth paths of two countries that had similarly low incomes per capita in the 1970s. By 1991, however, one country's per capita income was more than seven times that of the other. Much of the gap cannot be explained by differences in investment rates alone; rather, an important part of the explanation lies in differences in human capital and other factors related to knowledge acquisition and innovation between the two countries.

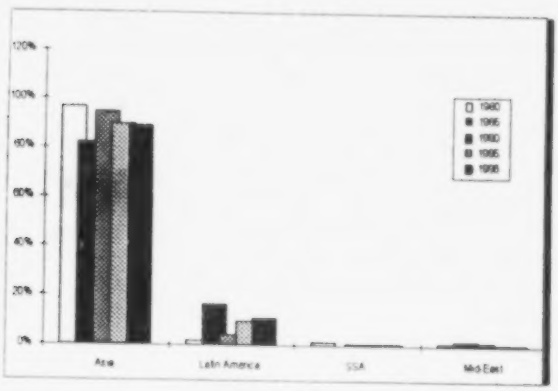
26. Adequate response to the opportunities created by globalization will largely depend on the distribution of skills between countries and among groups within the same country and between women and men. As figure III shows, skills are highly unequally distributed between regions of the world, with the lowest levels in sub-Saharan Africa. The growing role of technology in the context of trade liberalization has meant an increasing share of world trade for those regions with high skill endowments in high technology, high value-added exports (figure IV).

Figure III. Tertiary technical enrolment in developing regions (Percentage population)



Source: S. Lall, 1998.

Figure IV. Share of high-tech exports by developing regions (Percentage)



Source: S. Lall, 1998.

II. Policy issues

27. In view of the persistence of poverty in many developing countries, there is a need for a concerted effort to define an effective strategy for poverty reduction that also promotes gender equality. Such a strategy should have four major building blocks. First, in order to reduce poverty through enhancement of productive employment opportunities, it is necessary to have fast, sustained, employment-intensive and human-centred growth. This leads to the consideration of macroeconomic policies at both national and international levels. Second, at the microlevel, poverty eradication strategies should aim at improving market outcomes for the poor in general and disadvantaged socio-economic groups in particular. Third, public policies should provide the enabling environment for the efficient functioning of markets, and seek to correct market distortions and imperfections, which militate against equity and social protection. Finally, participation by the poor based on the recognition of their fundamental rights can accelerate social progress, and in turn reduce poverty through improved access to employment and socio-economic opportunities for all.

A. Macroeconomic policies and poverty alleviation

28. Experience has shown that sound macroeconomic policies provide the function for an appropriate policy mix that would facilitate increased demand for labour and ensure redistribution in favour of the poor and vulnerable groups, and thereby be effective in reducing poverty. An appropriate macroeconomic policy framework for reducing poverty and promoting equality should, *inter alia*, meet the following three conditions, that is to say:

(a) Achieve fast, sustainable and stable growth;

(b) Ensure that growth is employment-intensive, balanced and gender-sensitive;

(c) Create conditions to reduce vulnerability to short-term shocks.

1. The central role of growth

29. Although economic growth is not the only requirement for poverty reduction, poverty tends to fall with growth in average income and consumption levels. However, initial distribution of incomes does matter in determining the share of the poor in rising average incomes; higher initial inequality tends to reduce the impact of growth on absolute poverty. Economic growth, though a necessary condition for poverty reduction, is nevertheless an insufficient one.

30. Significantly, gender equality is likely to enhance economic growth overall. In Africa, gender inequality in employment opportunities is estimated to have accounted for a reduced annual per capita growth of 0.7 per cent between 1960 and 1992 (see box below). Eliminating gender discrimination in economic opportunities and pay would increase both women's income and gross domestic product (GDP). Thus, ***the objective should be to mainstream gender equality in macroeconomic policies and adopt targeted public policies that promote gender equality.***

Gender and growth: missed potential

Recent studies have examined the linkage between gender, growth and poverty reduction in the context of sub-Saharan Africa. It is argued that one of the factors constraining growth and poverty reduction in sub-Saharan Africa is gender inequality in access to and control of a diverse range of assets. For example:

(a) **Burkina Faso:** Shifting existing resources between men and women's plots within the same household could increase output by 10–20 per cent;

(b) **Kenya:** Giving women farmers the same level of agricultural inputs as men would increase yields obtained by women by more than 20 per cent;

(c) **United Republic of Tanzania:** Reducing time burdens of women could increase household cash incomes for smallholder coffee and banana growers by 10 per cent, labour productivity by 15 per cent and capital productivity by 44 per cent;

(d) **Zambia:** If women enjoyed the same overall degree of capital investment in agricultural inputs, including land, as their male counterparts, output could increase by up to 15 per cent.

Source: "Gender, growth and poverty reduction", 1998 report on poverty in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 1999).

31. Since the aim is to reduce global poverty by half by the year 2015, an important element would be high rates of economic growth. In its 1997 report, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) showed that ***GNP per capita growth should double in the poorest countries between 1995 and 2015 to reduce poverty incidence by half.*** UNDP has estimated that in order to reduce poverty significantly over the next two decades, developing countries need to grow at a rate of about 6 per cent per annum. Thus, ***a trend rate of growth of 6 per cent per***

annum for developing countries may be regarded as the minimum socially necessary rate that would both reduce poverty significantly and meet the employment needs of a rapidly growing labour force.

32. A substantial increase in real world demand is a key element in a strategy to increase world employment and production levels, particularly in the present global experience. Faster economic growth in rich countries could help those countries as well as the poorer developing countries, through increased demand for exports, which should lead to faster output growth and employment. This, however, implies the right types of international and national policy environments.

33. It is important to realize that increasing the growth of *real* demand today is not a matter simply of instituting expansionary fiscal and monetary policies. It involves a much more complex and difficult task, given the conditions of increased competition in a globalized world economy. Policy makers must try to ensure that growth is of the right kind; that is to say, it should be non-inflationary and stable and should create work and benefit the poor, in particular women. It is therefore necessary to strike a balance between the desire to control inflation, on the one hand, and the need to correct structural weaknesses and economic imbalances, as a means of stimulating faster growth, on the other. While countries have the primary responsibility in formulating and implementing development policies, they can be helped by an enabling environment, especially on matters pertaining to trade, finance and debt.

2. The design of policies for employment-intensive growth

34. For growth to be employment-augmenting, macroeconomic policies need to be employment-intensive: a good sectoral mix in investment can help to maximize employment creation. In developed economies, the predominant employment concern frequently is an increasing rate of open unemployment. By contrast, in developing countries the problem is often low productivity, low wage employment or underemployment. Thus, an effective development strategy would need to take into account the complex interrelationship among growth, employment and productivity, in light of specific national conditions and levels of development.

35. The productive sectors play a leading role in determining productivity and employment outcomes. Rapid growth in key sectors with high employment potential may lead to a situation where overall productivity growth is positively related to employment generation. While the industrial sector could be significant in this regard, one must be aware that an important element of a poverty reduction strategy is the promotion of the agricultural sector (especially non-traditional agricultural exports), which employs most of the poor. Access to markets and improved marketing arrangements could promote competition and increase production for export. Therefore, ***the targeting of key economic sectors could be a viable strategy for employment-intensive growth, with reforms of the incentive system (prices, wages, exchange rates and interest rates) effected in such a way as to shift resources to those sectors while avoiding cost distortions which could reduce competitiveness.***

36. In many developing and transition economies, strategies for ***stimulating the development of small and medium-sized enterprises can encourage employment creation and lead to poverty reduction.*** These types of enterprises need an appropriate enabling legal and regulatory framework, a properly adapted tax regime, and policies to help with access to credit. ***Entrepreneurial training,*** especially among women, should receive appropriate attention.

3. Reducing vulnerability to short-term shocks and mobilization of resources

37. Economic instability, not to mention the crisis conditions that have occurred recently in East and South-East Asia, Brazil and the Russian Federation, has serious short- and long-term repercussions, particularly for the most disadvantaged groups of the population, including women.[8]

38. In addition to the need to design appropriate policy responses, a crucial condition for achieving stability and resumed growth is the mobilization of resources. Domestic resource mobilization is essential; however, additional external resource flows would be necessary to achieve these objectives. While developing countries that have received large foreign direct investment (FDI) and other capital inflows have achieved high growth, they have also been subject to extreme downside risks of volatile capital movements. Thus, ***what developing countries require for growth and long-term development is improved access to long-term investment capital. This can be achieved through an appropriate mix of policies designed to attract investment capital, while regulating volatile short-term capital flows. The poorest and least developed countries require higher levels of concessional finance, including official development assistance (ODA), on a sustained long-term basis and a halt to large reverse transfers occurring through debt servicing, depressed commodity prices and weak terms of trade.*** As stated below, a major concern of developing countries is the restrictiveness, inflexibility and limited scope and coverage of the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and other recent debt-relief initiatives.

B. Improving market outcomes

39. While the design of a macroeconomic policy framework that ensures fast, stable, employment-intensive and gender-balanced growth is indispensable, consistent micro-policies are also essential components of an anti-poverty strategy. Improving market outcomes for the poor and vulnerable implies improved access to factor markets for men and women: labour, assets and credit, as well as increased returns to labour, the major asset of the poor. This is vitally important in the context of globalization, where skill endowments are crucial for determining the distribution of income among countries and between different groups within countries and between women and men.

1. Labour markets: do they include or exclude the poor, especially women?

40. A major determinant of poverty is the lack of access by the poor to factor and commodity markets, as well as the terms on which they access these markets. There are various reasons for such discrimination against the poor in terms of market outcomes. First, and most important, is the lack of the skill and knowledge that can enable the poor to participate in economic activity. Second, labour-market segmentation can discriminate against the poor on the basis of skill, sex or race. That these are ultimately reflected in low returns to the poor keeps them trapped in a cycle of poverty.

41. Labour-market outcomes in many instances discriminate against the poor and against women in particular. An effective anti-poverty strategy should therefore aim at correcting inequality and gender biases. Differences in labour-market outcomes and in particular income between men and women can result, on the one hand, in social inequality and, on the other, in an inefficient labour market, with underutilization of women's labour and lower levels of output overall.

42. Improving market outcomes for the poor would require a multi-strand policy. First, ***enhancing the capabilities of the poor, particularly through health, education and skill***

formation, must become an explicit objective of public policy. Second, ***a conscious policy of women's empowerment would be a precondition of removing labour-market segmentation.*** Furthermore, ***a proactive gender policy would require increasing girls' education thus improving their attachment to the labour market; removing wage differentials both in legislation and in practice; removing gender bias from the tax system; improving access to training; reforming the legal frameworks that inhibit access to high-level and decision-making occupations; and strengthening the coverage of social security and social safety nets for women, particularly those in precarious situations and in times of crises, especially female heads of households.***

2. Informal and non-standard employment

43. The debate on appropriate policies towards the informal sector remains inconclusive.[9] On the one hand, the informal sector serves a useful purpose as a "sponge" in absorbing surplus labour and providing goods and services for lower-income groups; on the other, informal sector employment is regarded as a survival strategy for the poor for lack of a better alternative. Policy advice therefore ranges from action to improve productivity and income levels in the sector so as to support its expansion and upgrading, to the provision of support through direct resource transfers to the sector. The situation is further complicated by increased informalization as a result of deregulation.

44. One policy approach for the informal sector could aim at both increasing effective demand for informal sector goods and services and raising productivity and income levels in the sector. This will include ***measures aimed at improved access to credit, especially microfinance*** (for example, Grameen and Bancosol); ***linking financial services to skill development training; and providing extension services, especially on technology and marketing. The poor, with special attention to women, should be given improved access to productive resources such as credit, technology and marketing techniques to facilitate entry into viable self-employment businesses.*** Furthermore, the ***stimulation of effective demand overall could serve to strengthen economic linkages between the informal and formal sectors of the economy.***

45. Given the increasing share of non-standard forms of work in total employment in many poor developing countries, a critical policy issue relates to the fact both that this form of employment is precarious and that it constitutes the sole basis of a livelihood and the possibility of breaking out of poverty. This is particularly important in the case of women for whom part-time and flexible forms of work are prevalent. Another policy issue relates to the implications of these types of employment for equality and job security. Naturally, to improve conditions of non-standard employment and offer job security would require finance and incentives, but these should be seen in terms of the ultimate goal of providing social protection to vulnerable and insecure groups in the labour force.

C. The role of public policies

46. In addition to sound macroeconomic management and micro-interventions, there are at least three areas through which public policies can contribute to poverty reduction. These include:

(a) Reallocation of public expenditure (human capital formation in education, health and skill formation);

(b) Adoption of gender-sensitive policies for promoting employment and reaching gender equality;

(c) Extension of social protection through social safety nets.

1. The role of public expenditures on human development in poverty eradication

47. Investment in human capital formation including education, health and skill formation has proved to be a crucial element in any effective strategy for poverty eradication. The poor, who by definition are asset-poor, rely on their labour to earn income and participate in the community. Lower human capital endowments constrain their capability. It has been observed that, "the significant transformation that has occurred in recent years in giving greater recognition to the role of ***'human capital'*** is helpful for understanding the relevance of the capability perspective. If a person can become more productive through better education, better health, and so on, it is not unnatural to expect that she can also directly achieve more — and have the freedom to achieve more — in leading her life. Both perspectives put humanity at the centre of attention".[10] However, for increased social spending to have a positive impact on poverty, such spending should be consistent with efficiency criteria including intersectoral distribution.

48. Public expenditure on human capital formation should be one of the cornerstones of an anti-poverty strategy. This will have policy implications at both the national and international levels. At the national level:

- ***Fiscal policy should avoid compression of expenditure on health, education and skill formation, even under conditions of budgetary constraints.*** In this regard, progress has been made in many developing countries where public spending on education and health has increased against a background of fiscal adjustment under IMF-supported programmes.[11] At the same time, unproductive public expenditure, such as excessive military spending, should be avoided or reduced;
- ***Distribution of such public expenditure should favour the poor, especially women. Active policies and programmes are needed to overcome gender discrimination;***
- ***Targeting poor groups, poor regions and women and girls makes sense according to both efficiency and equity criteria.***

49. ***At the international level, a main objective of development assistance should be to support national efforts for sustained human capital formation. In the interested countries, the 20/20 initiative is particularly relevant in this regard.***

2. Gender-sensitive public policies for employment promotion and poverty eradication

50. Human capital endowments strongly influence labour-market outcomes with respect to employment and income levels. The household is the locus of decision-making for investment in human capital in many developing countries: health, nutrition, education, training, work and leisure. Such decisions are mediated by social norms and conventions, by access to resources and by perceptions of the market. In most countries of the world, women earn on average one third less than men, so that household and individual return on investment in girls is less than for boys. With scarce resources, households tend to favour boys, and this becomes self-reinforcing: the less the household invests in girls, the lower the returns, and the less the incentive to invest.

51. What is useful for the household is not always useful for society, however: investment in the education of girls has one of the highest returns of any development investment. There is ample research to show that girls with better education not only strengthen their economic welfare by improving their employment and income opportunities but also provide a number

of additional benefits for the entire family: fertility declines, and children who are better fed have better health and lower mortality and are, in turn, more likely to go to school themselves, and have fewer children. Gains in women's education lead to increases in women's participation in the formal labour force — one extra year of education increases female labour force participation by three years — and increases their productivity. This, in turn, reduces discrimination against women (whereby an employer is less likely to hire or invest in women because most women have a looser attachment to the labour force), and also strengthens the incentives for households to invest in girls' education. The policy implications are clear: ***poverty alleviation can be more effective when directed to overcoming the imbalance between public and private gains through investments in the human capital of girls, in particular girls' education.***

52. There is a wide range of other policy measures to address poverty by eliminating gender disparities in the labour market. Equal pay and non-discrimination often call for legislative intervention. Protective legislation, originally intended to protect women and their future progeny from the harmful effects of employment, has increasingly come to be seen as an impediment to labour efficiency and a restriction on women's labour-market options. ***Removing such restrictions on women's work in certain professions, for example, mining, or at certain times, such as on night shifts, can significantly increase women's labour-market options. Worker protection is better addressed through health and safety regulations for both sexes.***

53. In the coordination of family and employment policy, maternity and child-care leave legislation present a special case. Where employers, rather than social insurance, are paying the bill for maternity and child-care leave, the effect is a maternity tax on all women. Men become less costly to hire, and the end result is discrimination against women in the labour market. ***Broadening child-care leave to cover either parent, and providing the funds from social insurance are necessary (but not sufficient) to overcome part of this discrimination. Specific anti-discrimination legislation needs to accompany these measures.***

54. Equally important is the availability of day-care facilities while parents work, whether provided by the public or the private sector. Recent research suggests that ***subsidizing childcare is substantially more effective in increasing maternal employment and household welfare than wage subsidies or family allowances.***

55. In facilitating women's participation in the labour market, tax legislation can play a significant role. ***Lowering marginal tax rates for a second income to the household can provide a stimulus to married women's labour-market participation.***

56. Women's looser attachment to the labour market and their role in household maintenance and childcare call for ***special attention to gender in the design of social insurance.*** In addition, certain types of female-headed households, mainly those with a single earner and one or more dependants, are especially vulnerable to poverty on account of lower pay levels for women, higher dependency ratios and the need for childcare to allow employment. ***Unemployment policies and programmes similarly need to address gender specifically, because women's unemployment risk and duration differ significantly from those of men in many countries.***

57. Wage differentials and women's looser attachment to the labour force ultimately translate into pension gaps as workers age: women receive lower pensions than men. Elderly, single-female households have high risks of poverty in both developed and developing countries which may require attention in respect of designing social assistance programmes.

3. Extending social protection through social safety nets

58. The best form of social safety net is provided by full employment. Hence, ***the primary focus of action by Governments and international assistance should be on policies to generate full employment in the first place.*** However, in the absence of full employment, and in situations of slow growth, the need for social protection can hardly be overemphasized. The Asian crisis has shown that countries with inadequate social protection systems tend to undergo greater social and economic instability, and face greater difficulties in weathering the adverse social outcomes of crises. It is evident from the experience of the crisis-affected countries of Asia that even rapid economic growth does not automatically guarantee equitable distribution or social protection. ***A social protection system, in its broad elements, needs to be progressively introduced in the face of increasing job and income insecurity.*** Ideally, such systems should be cost-effective and financially viable, as well as administratively manageable. They should also be targeted at the poor and vulnerable.

59. The concept of social protection must be incorporated into a comprehensive employment policy framework, which should be concerned not only about creating jobs in normal periods of steady economic growth, but also — and very much — about dealing with the consequences of rapid job loss during economic crises and periods of restructuring. An important means of providing income security for workers who lose their jobs is through the introduction of unemployment benefits. Feasibility studies carried out recently by ILO suggest that a system of unemployment insurance can be established at a very modest level of payroll taxes, can be largely self-financing and can provide critical income support after job losses even during a major economic crisis. In addition to unemployment insurance, it will be necessary to expand systems of social assistance to provide basic income support for those on the fringe of the modern sector and the informal sector. Such income support could include income in kind and subsidies for essential goods as well as improved access to basic social services. However, for many developing countries, the implementation of such safety net policies would pose considerable difficulties in terms of resources and organization. It is in this regard that improved access to international capital flows, especially investment resources and technical assistance from the United Nations system, becomes critical.

60. The poor usually respond to risks from shocks to their income-earning capacity with a series of ingenious market and non-market mechanisms, but these are not enough. Longer-term solutions must ensure greater access to productive assets, such as land, livestock and credits. Helping to build up these assets is a key policy in providing security to the poor. Opening up trading opportunities, through infrastructure development, for example, can help to increase the security of the poor through providing avenues for diversification. Labour-based schemes — public works and unemployment insurance in some combination, depending on the country — are central to providing security against risks for the poor. The key to these and other non-labour-based schemes is to design programmes so that they maintain their function of providing insurance for the poor and are not captured by others.

61. In addition to addressing the employment situation of women, there is need in many countries for improvements in the design of labour-market policies and programmes to enhance employment opportunities of other vulnerable groups: (a) ***young people*** of working age who continue to face unemployment or limited prospects for engaging in activities that provide sustainable livelihood; (b) ***older workers*** who face obstacles to continued employment, while at the same time lacking adequate social protection in the form of social security and pension upon retirement; and (c) ***persons with disabilities*** who may face discrimination in the labour market and negative stereotyping, and may yet be denied practical assistance to help them obtain employment in the "open market", or other

alternative form of employment. For these people, targeted transfers schemes based on community-level monitoring are the best mechanisms.

62. ***An objective of social policy should be the setting up of a well-functioning and equitable social safety net system. There is an urgent need for transfer of experience in the design and institutionalization of such systems taking into account the specific conditions of different countries.*** An important institutional requirement for the efficient functioning of the labour market encompasses free organizations of workers and employers which have an important role to play in strengthening democracy and in promoting social consensus on reform issues. In addition, ministries of labour and social affairs need to adapt their structures and policies to the requirements of a competitive labour market. This underpins the importance of developing administrative capacity to design and implement sound policies in specific national contexts.

D. Rights and voice

63. A sustained reduction in poverty through growth and employment can occur and continue only if it is accompanied by social progress. The Constitution of ILO made the point in 1919.[12] Since then and most recently, very clear pronouncements have been made and endorsed by a broad range of countries in an equally broad range of forums, including the World Summit for Social Development[13] and ILO through its new Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work adopted by the International Labour Conference at its Eighty-sixth Session, Geneva, 18 June 1998.[14] These most recent expressions join an important list of international instruments setting out the same principle: ***complementary steps taken to promote social justice can hasten the improvement of the human condition through the overall generation of wealth.*** The elimination of poverty and the improvement of the human condition are also important elements of the overall aims of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (see General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex) and the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development (General Assembly resolution 41/128, annex).

64. The question confronting policy makers is how the rights implicit in these various pronouncements and instruments can be applied to help in accelerating social progress and, in turn, reducing poverty through employment. ***First and foremost, the promotion of basic human rights must serve to empower the very people whose rights are at issue.*** Participation and empowerment of the poor, especially women, with respect to development efforts are made possible by their effective organization. Thus, policies are needed to promote their freedom of association and their ability to bargain collectively. Improved productivity and "smart management" become possible only when workers have an effective voice in the workplace.[15]

65. From experience in employment- and income-generation schemes, it is clear that there are tremendous implications to the denial of these rights. Without the possibility of legal organization, for example,

- Systematic consultation and negotiation is difficult if not impossible;
- Possibilities for extending access to credit, technical assistance and/or training as well as to assets and justice is hindered;

- Involvement in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of development programmes are constrained.

66. Finally, ***the institution of a tripartite structure at the national level would increase social dialogue, thus facilitating policy-making. The role of women within legal organizations, including labour unions, should be emphasized to ensure that women's voices are heard in the social dialogue.***

67. If employment is to reach the marginalized poor, who are often women, ***policies aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination must be in place and implemented.***[16] Consequently, one of the ILO's core labour standards addresses discrimination as indicated in the recently adopted Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Thus, the Declaration states that "the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation" must be respected, promoted and realized by all member States, in order to "ensure equity, social progress and the eradication of poverty".

68. The principle of non-discrimination is reinforced by the far-reaching scope of the standard enunciated in the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). This convention states that at least two types of action are required: first, that all discrimination based on sex, among other things, inhibiting access to employment, occupation and training, must be progressively eliminated; and second, that positive actions are to be taken to remedy earlier discrimination against women.

69. International human rights standards that touch on labour matters — those both of the United Nations and of ILO — have poverty eradication as an overarching objective; but they do not, per se, oblige States to eradicate poverty. It follows that the supervision of international standards does not ask States to demonstrate the eradication of poverty. Thus, there is no opportunity for international supervisory mechanisms — the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women or the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights — to comment upon poverty eradication measures, per se.

70. There are standards that do, however, oblige ratifying States to undertake what experience has shown needs to be undertaken so as to develop employment as a means of eradicating poverty. This includes standards that oblige undertaking action to empower and advance women and other groups in ways that enhance the poverty eradication impact of employment. By sharply focusing on such actions, these international standards can be useful in formulating, sustaining and monitoring poverty-eradicating policies. Moreover, since international standards do create explicit obligations and an implicit right of citizens to benefit from their own country's international undertakings, there is wisdom in making this linkage. This is what a rights-based approach should be designed to achieve. For example, the ILO Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122), sets out what is known by all working in the field: without a commitment to an active employment policy based on national conditions and circumstances, solutions to poverty through employment are unlikely to be found. Similarly, the ILO Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142), requires the ratifying State to adopt and develop comprehensive and coordinated policies and programmes of vocational guidance and vocational training, closely linked with employment. The collection of accurate and timely labour-market information needed to understand the structure of national employment is the object of the ILO Labour Statistics Convention, 1985 (No. 160).[17]

71. The examples above clearly illustrate the potential of the standards to provide a normative framework for social policy-making.

72. A case has been made here for international labour standards and human rights declarations to inform social policy-making. Admittedly, this is a controversial area, as it involves difficult trade-offs. However, historical experience has shown that, in the long run, respect for rights is consistent with improved and sustained social progress. ***A combination of national and international policies is required to promote the rights-based approach described above without introducing new conditionalities or using these standards and norms as a pretext for new protectionism. At the national level, legislation must take into account the need to apply these standards. The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work provides a realistic framework for such a policy. At the international level, effort is required to enable developing countries in particular to bridge the gap of "social deficit". This can only be achieved through a programme of assistance to develop a promotional approach to the institutionalization of rights and organizations, especially for the poor and women and men alike.***

E. Policies at the international level

73. The large income inequalities at the international level are also an impediment to poverty reduction efforts. It is thus important to sustain progress towards a more open, rules-based, world economy characterized by free flows of trade and foreign direct investment — more widely distributed — and increased financial flows. This implies the creation of an international enabling environment for more balanced and widespread human-centred growth in the world economy. Imbalances in growth and distortions of markets at the international level are as much an obstacle to poverty reduction as those at the national level. Major developed countries whose policies shape the international environment more than others have the largest responsibility to help reduce such imbalances and distortions.

74. A more free and open world economy means that the vast differences in expenditures on human capital formation in rich and poor countries should be steadily resolved. Increase in the free movement of capital, goods and services should be accompanied by an equally free movement of people and the elimination of market-distorting policies should be pursued by all countries.

75. As regards open trade, it is now widely recognized that exports have a higher job creation propensity and that jobs related to exports pay on average higher wages than other jobs. Therefore, the opening of markets and expanding of exports are of great importance to economic growth and the creation of productive and remunerative jobs. Less widely recognized is that imports, too, contribute to economic well-being and, indirectly, to more jobs. Imports linked to liberalization and expansion of trade can produce benefits for domestic consumers in terms of lower prices and wider choice. Similarly, domestic producers can benefit from lower costs and wider choice for imported inputs, thereby enhancing productivity, and increasing international competitiveness, which results in more jobs and higher wages.

76. However, if developing countries, particularly the poorest and least developed among them, are to benefit from a vibrant international trading system, especially in the context of increased globalization, trade should be not only open but fair. This will require elimination of barriers to products of export interest to developing countries, particularly the least developed and low-income countries.

77. For a large number of the least developed and low-income countries, particularly in Africa, severe debt burdens represent an obstacle to productive investment in human resources and job creation. The unsustainable debt positions of these countries need to be

addressed and solved in the context of the economic reform and adjustment. Relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) through the World Bank/IMF initiative is a step in the right direction. In addition, financial support for these countries' fiscal and social objectives needs to be increased.

78. Recent financial crises and increasing turbulence in international capital markets are having a negative impact on employment. Millions of workers mainly in developing and transition economies are losing their jobs and being forced into poverty and exclusion. The current efforts to strengthen and adjust the international financial architecture need to address development concerns, which go beyond stability in markets, along with greater transparency in institutions, countries and markets; and better regulation of short-term capital flows.

F. Partnership with the civil society and the private sector

79. Private sector corporations and other organizations of civil society already play an immense role in development, and have a growing contribution to make. Partnership between the United Nations system and civil society including the business community has been given a boost more recently by the Secretary-General through specific initiatives and dialogues. In his address to the business community at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 1999, the Secretary-General proposed a "global compact" with business based on certain fundamental values enshrined in the principles and mandates of the United Nations system and said: "Creating wealth, which is your expertise, and promoting human security in the broadest sense, the main concern of the United Nations, are mutually reinforcing goals. Thriving markets and human security go hand in hand; without one, we will not have the other. A world of hunger, poverty and injustice is one in which markets, peace and freedom will never take root." Harnessing the global creative energies of these enterprises and organizations presents a major development challenge on the threshold of the new century.

III. Poverty eradication, a one-world problem: an agenda for action

80. Notwithstanding the progress made, and the commitments pledged, poverty continues to be the condition of one third of the world's population, most of them women. Human poverty and exclusion continue to deprive citizens of their basic rights to have a decent employment and participate in social and political life. On the understanding that, in many cases, women and men become impoverished through different processes and face different opportunities and constraints in accessing the labour market, it is necessary to focus on concrete gender-aware policy prescriptions concerning employment creation for poverty eradication.

81. Recent global conferences have highlighted human-centred economic growth; basic physical infrastructures; fundamental social services; access to work; land and credit; empowerment of women; food security; natural resources regeneration; good governance; and vulnerable groups as the priorities in efforts to achieve the overarching objective to eradicate poverty. An effective agenda for action would require a concerted effort at three mutually reinforcing levels: the national level; the multilateral system, in particular the United Nations and its specialized agencies including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization; and bilateral donors. The elements of such an agenda build

upon previous commitments and the work undertaken within the United Nations system, especially the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) statement of commitment for action to eradicate poverty (22 June 1998)[18] and follow-up work undertaken by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) in September 1998.[19] These elements are outlined below.

A. The national context: the need for renewed and specific political commitments

82. National Governments have the primary responsibility for poverty eradication. All the countries of the world have approved the declarations and programmes of the global United Nations conferences. A survey by UNDP found that significant progress in laying down the basis for implementation of the commitments contained therein has been made, but much remains to be done.[20]

83. The starting point for action at the country level is a renewed commitment to specific targets for poverty reduction and the adoption of policies to achieve such objectives. ***It is proposed that all interested Member States embrace the 20/20 initiative and also adopt a set of concrete targets for poverty reduction by the year 2015,*** such as those declared by the Development Assistance Committee of OECD. These targets include a commitment to reducing extreme poverty by half, but also to achieving universal primary education, eliminating gender disparity in education by 2005, reducing infant and child mortality by two thirds, reducing maternal mortality by three fourths and achieving universal access to reproductive health services. These are all measurable indicators of poverty reduction. The outcome targets specified in the OECD DAC goals would be very difficult to achieve unless progress is made towards achieving the input target underlying the 20/20 initiative. However, progress so far in achieving related targets, since they were first set at the World Summit for Children (1990) and then endorsed at the World Summit for Social Development, has been too slow.

84. Governments should commit themselves to implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and to taking steps to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and relevant ILO conventions and their implementation, with the aim of removing legal obstacles and socio-economic biases to equality, including in employment and work.

85. More specifically, ***a people-centred and gender-sensitive development strategy should be put in place,*** with emphasis on the following components:

(a) ***Policies and institutions should be designed for rapid, sustained, human-centred and sustainable economic growth;***

(b) Countries should commit themselves to ***a development strategy that recognizes the centrality of employment creation for both women and men as the most effective policy instrument of poverty reduction.*** The objective of achieving full employment should continue to guide macro- and microeconomic policies, with particular attention to differential impact by gender;

(c) Governments should ensure ***the creation of equitable systems of social protection and safety nets to women and men alike, while paying attention to their differential impact.*** In particular, they should provide social protection for particularly vulnerable and marginalized groups of women workers (for example, female immigrant

workers, women in countries with economies in transition and least developed economies, and long-term unemployed and older women workers);

(d) Governments should provide ***employment security for women and men workers who are in part-time, contract, seasonal, temporary, casual or home-based work, and social assistance in kind for those engaged outside the formal sectors.*** As more and more women are obliged to go into these non-standard forms of work, the challenge is to ensure that such types of work are not sub-standard in terms of working conditions and social protection;

(e) ***There must be the institutional capacity to manage and deliver basic social services effectively to poor women and men, with full recognition of the important role of private and non-governmental actors and the participation of both men and women and their communities in the provision and distribution of such services.*** In all these actions, a deliberate effort should be made to promote effective women's participation;

(f) A powerful instrument at the disposal of Governments is budgetary allocations. ***Sufficient public funds must be directed to enhancing the capability of the poor, and analysing the impact of such allocations by gender.*** The provision of services to the poor in health and education requires particular attention. Increased access to education and training facilities, including entrepreneurship development training for women and girls, is necessary to ensure equal access with men to productive and remunerative employment opportunities;

(g) ***An equal employment opportunity policy, based on legislation that outlaws discrimination in employment and the labour market and ensures equal pay for work of equal value, must be adopted.***

B. The multilateral system: strengthening national capacities for poverty eradication

86. Recent changes on the world scene, including globalization, liberalization and recurrent crises, have created a new framework for international relations. This is a historic opportunity for the multilateral system — the United Nations and its specialized agencies including the Bretton Woods institutions — to assist in coping with these changes and innovatively enabling Member States to maximize their benefits from globalization and minimize vulnerability to the new types of insecurity that may threaten any potential progress.

87. Following the ACC statement of commitment for action to eradicate poverty, the organizations of the United Nations system should support, individually and through joint action where appropriate, the national poverty eradication strategy outlined above and help operationalize it. Specifically, ***the multilateral system should develop poverty eradication initiatives that combine the capacities and resources of agencies concerned with civil society and the private sector.*** Such initiatives could include the following components:

(a) ***Providing precise gender-aware assessment of the poverty situation by country;***

(b) ***Setting out the broad lines of macroeconomic policies that are consistent with a time-bound objective of poverty eradication within the context of accelerated human-centred and gender-sensitive growth.*** This approach would provide a consensus document to be used in policy advice to countries to strengthen their capacity for the design and implementation of macroeconomic policies consistent with employment-intensive growth and poverty reduction;

(c) ***Assisting Member States in establishing poverty eradication and monitoring units;***

(d) ***Helping Member States to set up cost-effective and equitable systems of social protection and safety nets, including the transfer of international experience;***

(e) ***Providing advice on enhancing the voice of, and representation by, the civil society, particularly women, through respect for human rights and core international labour standards;***

(f) ***Monitoring progress in poverty eradication and gender equality;***

(g) ***Assisting Member States in mobilizing resources, national and international, for the implementation of national poverty eradication strategies.***

C. The international community: enhanced development cooperation

88. ***The international community*** has a key role in poverty eradication by enhancing development cooperation as follows:

(a) ***Creating a coherent and consistent, pragmatic and pro-poor policy framework at the international level which can provide the basis for a more efficient allocation of resources in the world economy, and thus higher growth that is pro-poor, and from which all countries can potentially benefit;***

(b) ***Ensuring that poorer and marginalized countries on the fringe of the global economy are provided with international assistance and an enabling environment to facilitate and improve the conditions of their integration into the world economy. Such assistance could focus on improvements in education, training, technological research and development, and institution-building which are crucial for attracting foreign investment;***

(c) ***Recognizing that debt relief under the HIPC needs to be deeper, faster and broader. Adequate financing for such relief should be ensured and it should not be at the expense of ODA flows. This would require that the present decline in ODA flows should be redressed and donor countries commit themselves to increasing concessional flows to the least developed and low-income countries with a view to achieving the internationally accepted target of 0.7 per cent of GNP;***

(d) ***Encouraging longer-term capital flows to a large number of developing countries to support development objectives with the ultimate goal of the eradication of absolute poverty, mainly through improved access to productive employment and basic services, and integrating the social dimensions of development into policy objectives in the new international financial architecture. Provisions needed for social programmes and safety nets should accompany the instruments and means for reducing the volatility of financial flows.***

89. ***The time has come for a major rethinking of the approach to debt forgiveness,*** both by international organizations and by bilateral donors, with a view to providing immediate and full relief to the least developed low-income countries with unsustainable debt burdens, and strong anti-poverty, sustainable and people-centred development policies.

Notes

[1] See *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I, sect. C.

[2] See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, chap. IV, sect. A.

[3] Ibid.

[4] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/52/3/Rev.1), chap. IV, sect. A, agreed conclusions 1997/2, sect. I.B.

[5] UNDP, *Human Development Report, 1997* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1997).

[6] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.XVII.4.

[7] New York, Oxford University Press, 1999.

[8] Studies of the survival strategies of low-income households during periods of structural adjustment show that the women members of these households respond to economic distress by increasing their labour force participation rate, as well as the hours and intensity of their non-market labouring activities. This implies that it is mainly the women who adapt their behaviour in an effort to maintain the real consumption level of the household. Moreover, women lose their jobs first and families pull their daughters out of school before their sons. The particular situation of adolescent girls becomes more uncertain when employment opportunities or further educational programmes are cut off, leading to pressure for early marriage, exploitation or harsh conditions of work.

[9] ILO, *The Dilemma of the Informal Sector*.

[10] A. K. Sen, "Editorial: human capital and human capability", *World Development*, vol. 25, No. 12 (1997), pp. 1,959–1,961.

[11] See *IMF Survey*, 8 March 1999, pp. 79–80.

[12] Universal and lasting peace (implying a reduction of impoverishment) "can be established only if it is based upon social justice" (sect. I of the ILO Constitution).

[13] The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development called upon States to "reaffirm, promote and strive to ensure the realization of the rights set out in relevant international instruments and declarations, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Declaration on the Right to Development, including those relating to education, food, shelter, *employment*, health and information, *particularly in order to assist people living in poverty*" (commitment 1, para. (f)).

[14] In the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the ILO's member States (para. 2) declared that they had an obligation arising from the very fact of membership in the Organization, to respect, to promote and to realize, in good faith, the principles concerning the fundamental rights of freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, the effective abolition of child labour, and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation (*ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up adopted by the International Labour Conference at its Eighty-sixth Session, Geneva, 18 June 1998* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 1998)).

[15] The ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), are two of the international standards dealing with these subjects (see ILO, *International Labour Conventions and Recommendations, 1919–1951*, vol. I, part I (Geneva, International Labour Office, 1996)).

[16] The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is a fundamental instrument in this regard. It is complemented by the ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), and Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100).

[17] ILO, *International Labour Conventions* ..., vol. III.

[18] See E/1998/73.

[19] See ACC/1998/POQ/CRP.17.

[20] Almost 80 per cent of countries have gathered estimates of poverty and about 60 per cent have formulated plans to address it, but only 30 per cent have set goals for poverty reduction and eradication.

United Nations E/1999/54

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
20 May 1999

Original: English

Substantive session of 1999
Geneva, 5–30 July 1999
Item 14 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Social and human rights questions: advancement of women

Follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Report of the Secretary-General

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–3	3
II.	Results of the Commission on the Status of Women	4–21	3
	A. Agreed conclusions on women and health	4–8	3
	B. Agreed conclusions on institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women	9–14	4
	C. Other decisions of the Commission on the Status of Women	15–18	4
	D. Decisions of the Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly, "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"	19–20	5
	E. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	21	5
III.	Results of other functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council	22–46	5
	A. Commission for Social Development	22	5
	B. Commission on Population and Development	23–24	6
	C. Commission on Narcotic Drugs	25–26	6

* E/1999/100.

99-15065 (E) 080699

	D.	Commission on Human Rights	27–28	6
		1. Women's enjoyment of human rights	29–30	7
		2. Gender issues in the work of human rights treaty bodies, thematic rapporteurs and other mechanisms	31–34	7
		3. Attention to gender in issue-specific resolutions	35–40	8
		4. Country-specific resolutions	41	9
	E.	Commission on Sustainable Development	42–44	10
	F.	Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice	45	10
	G.	Statistical Commission	46	10
IV.		Activities of the regional commissions	47–60	11
	A.	Economic Commission for Africa	47	11
	B.	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	48–52	11
	C.	Economic Commission for Europe	53–54	11
	D.	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	55–56	12
	E.	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	57–60	12
V.		Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality of the Administrative Committee on Coordination	61–71	13

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 53/120, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually to the General Assembly, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council on the follow-up to and progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.[1] Similar requests were contained in General Assembly resolutions 50/203 and 52/100.

2. In each of the three reports submitted in the course of a year, on a rolling basis, information is provided that is most pertinent to the respective intergovernmental body in order to facilitate its decision-making. The reports to the Economic and Social Council focus on facilitating the coordination function of the Council. The reports to the Commission on the Status of Women emphasize efforts undertaken by the Secretariat in support of mainstreaming a gender perspective and other follow-up activities. The reports to the General Assembly contain information from entities of the United Nations system, including specialized agencies and international financial institutions, as well as an analysis of activities undertaken at the national level, and by non-governmental organizations and civil society.

3. The present report is intended to update the information provided in the reports to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, in 1998 (A/53/308) and the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-third session, in 1999 (E/CN.6/1999/2 and Add.1). It focuses on developments related to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in intergovernmental forums reporting to the Council, in the regional commissions and in the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality since the submission of the report of the Secretary-General (E/1998/53) to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 1998.

II. Results of the Commission on the Status of Women

A. Agreed conclusions on women and health

4. In its agreed conclusions on women and health,[2] the Commission on the Status of Women requested States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to consider general recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women when preparing their initial and periodic reports under the Convention, including on article 12. The Commission suggested formulating policies favourable to investments in women's health and intensified efforts to bridge the gap between commitments and implementation. Maternal and essential obstetric care, including emergency care, should be provided and strategies to prevent maternal deaths should be implemented. The development of safe, affordable, effective and easily accessible female-controlled methods of family planning, including dual methods such as microbicides and female condoms was suggested.

5. With regard to human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), sexually transmitted diseases and other infectious diseases, the importance of the highest level of political commitment to mitigate their impact through, *inter alia*, the provision of social services and support, together with poverty alleviation, was mentioned. Reference was made to the stigmatization and social exclusion that surrounded these diseases and the need to protect infected women who revealed their HIV status. Counselling and encouraging men and women infected with HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases to inform their partners were also recommended.

6. The Commission called for the development of preventive and remedial health services for mental disorders that are related to stress, depression, powerlessness, marginalization and trauma. Research should be undertaken on gender differences in the causes and effects of the use and abuse of substances, including narcotic drugs and alcohol. Programmes aimed at reducing tobacco use by women and girls, including through gender-sensitive cessation programmes should be designed and implemented.

7. Measures in relation to occupational and environmental health were addressed in order to protect women workers in all sectors, including agricultural and domestic household workers, through effective health policies.

8. The Commission recommended mainstreaming a gender perspective into the curricula, as well as the training, of all health care and service providers in order to ensure high-quality health services for women that could help eliminate discriminatory attitudes and practices. A gender perspective should be developed and applied to treatment and prevention practice in the health sector. Opportunities that might arise through health sector reform and development should be used to integrate systematically the process of gender analysis in the health sector and to undertake gender impact assessments and monitoring of all

health sector reforms and developments in order to ensure that women benefitted equally from them.

B. Agreed conclusions on institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

9. In its agreed conclusions on institutional mechanisms,[3] the Commission reaffirmed the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women,[4] notably chapter IV, section H, on institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women[5] and Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system.[6]

10. It was stated that for national machineries to be effective, clear mandates, location at the highest possible level, accountability mechanisms, partnership with civil society, a transparent political process, adequate financial and human resources, and continued strong political commitment were crucial. The importance of international cooperation in order to assist the work on national machineries in all countries, especially developing countries, was emphasized.

11. Specific recommendations were directed at Governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the international community in relation to creating and strengthening the work of national machineries; to ensuring that national machineries, as well as gender focal points within institutions, were not marginalized; and to supporting and promoting balanced participation of women and men in all areas of decision-making. National machineries were requested to strengthen their relationship with civil society through regular consultations with women's organizations, academic institutions and the private sector.

12. Governments were urged to ensure that senior management in each ministry/agency took responsibility for fulfilling gender equality commitments and integrating a gender perspective in all activities, ensuring that mainstreaming a gender perspective was fully understood, institutionalized and implemented. Governments were also urged to promote transparency through effective monitoring mechanisms using gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data, as well as other performance indicators and regular reporting, including under international agreements.

13. Governments were requested to give visibility to the relationship between remunerated and unremunerated work, and the importance of gender-analysis in this context; to develop methods for assessing the value of unremunerated work in quantitative terms; to acknowledge that unremunerated work by women was a considerable contribution to society; and to assess the real value of such work in order for it to be accurately reflected in satellite or other official accounts that were separate from, but consistent with, core national accounts.

14. The international community, including the United Nations, was called upon to implement Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2, and to ensure that individual managers were held accountable for implementing the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995–2000). Heads of departments were invited to develop gender action plans to meet the goal of 50/50 gender distribution and to document and publish "good practices".

C. Other decisions of the Commission on the Status of Women

15. The Commission recommended three draft resolutions for adoption by the Economic and Social Council.[7] In a draft resolution on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, the Council would condemn the continuing grave violations of the human rights of women and girls in all areas of Afghanistan and urge all Afghan parties to end all human rights violations against women and girls and to recognize, protect, promote and act in accordance with all international human rights instruments. In the draft resolution on Palestinian women, the Council would support the Middle East peace process and the need for increased efforts to ensure that the peace process was directed towards the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. In a draft resolution on a system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 2002–2005, the Council would invite the Secretary-General to prepare an assessment of the current plan (1996–2001) for consideration by the Council through the Commission in 2000 and to submit the plan for 2002–2005 to the Council through the Commission in 2001.

16. In its resolution 43/1 on the release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts,[8] the Commission condemned violent acts against women and children in areas of armed conflict, strongly urged all parties to armed conflicts to respect fully the norms of international humanitarian law in

armed conflict, and called for the immediate release of those taken hostage. The Commission urged all parties to armed conflicts to protect women and children and to provide them with unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance.

17. In its resolution 43/2 on women, the girl child and HIV/AIDS, the Commission recognized an alarming increase in the number of women and girls living with HIV/AIDS, as well as the link between this and prevailing gender inequalities. The Commission emphasized that the advancement and empowerment of women was critical to increasing the ability of women and young girls to protect themselves from HIV infection. The Commission urged Governments to establish a social and legal framework to support and protect the rights of those living with HIV/AIDS and to address the particular needs of women and girls in this context.

18. In its resolution 43/3 on women and mental health, with emphasis on special groups, the Commission called for the integration of mental health as a priority issue when implementing the health objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and other relevant international agreements. It requested Governments to include in their national policies specific measures addressing the mental health needs of women and girls. The Commission urged the Secretary-General to organize, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources, regional expert group meetings with a view to developing gender- and age-disaggregated and gender-sensitive psychosocial and mental health situation analyses and indicators as a basis for determining progress in women's and girls' emotional well-being and mental health.

D. Decisions of the Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly, "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

19. The Commission, acting as the Preparatory Committee, adopted a draft resolution for submission to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, by which the Assembly would invite Member States to prepare responses to the questionnaire of the Secretary-General on review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Assembly would encourage the Regional Commissions to carry out regional preparatory activities. It would also encourage all entities of the United Nations system, as well as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to take part in preparatory activities and to participate at the highest level in the special session.

20. The General Assembly would reaffirm that the special session would take place on the basis of, and with full respect for, the Platform for Action and that there would be no renegotiation of the existing agreements contained therein. Further, the Assembly would encourage the active involvement of non-governmental organizations and other relevant actors of civil society in the preparatory process at national, regional and international levels. The Assembly would provide for the participation in the special session of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, as well as those that were accredited to the Fourth World Conference on Women, without creating a precedent for future sessions of the General Assembly.

E. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

21. The Commission adopted by consensus a draft Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,[9] to be recommended to the Council for adoption by the General Assembly and opening for signature, accession and ratification by States Parties to the Convention. The Protocol contains two procedures: a communications procedure allowing individual women, or groups of women, to submit to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women claims of violations of rights protected under the Convention. The Protocol also would create an inquiry procedure enabling the Committee to initiate inquiries into situations of grave or systematic violations of women's rights.

III. Results of other functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council

A. Commission for Social Development

22. The Commission for Social Development held its thirty-seventh session from 9 to 19 February 1999 with "Social services for all" as a priority theme. The

Commission articulated that social services were an integral part of, and positively contribute to, social and economic development. In its agreed conclusions,[10] it stressed the primary responsibility of Governments in providing or ensuring that basic social services are available to every member of society. The elimination of discrimination against women, the empowerment and full participation of women in all areas of life and at all stages in the provision of social services were recognized as priority objectives. Gender-sensitive social services were strongly recommended, and the importance of addressing the different needs of different population groups was stressed.

B. Commission on Population and Development

23. At its thirty-second session, held on 22, 23 and 26 March 1999, the Commission on Population and Development reaffirmed in its decision 1999/1 that "Gender, population and development" should be the special theme for the Commission at its thirty-third session, in the year 2000, in order to provide inputs into the special session of the General Assembly for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.[11]

24. Acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Commission drafted proposals for the further implementation of the Programme of Action (E/CN.9/1999/PC/4). These included a chapter on "Gender equality, equity and empowerment of women" addressing issues of promotion and protection of women's human rights, empowerment of women, gender perspective in programmes and policies and advocacy against negative attitudes and practices.

C. Commission on Narcotic Drugs

25. At its twentieth special session devoted to countering the world drug problem together, held from 8 to 10 June 1998, the General Assembly adopted a Political Declaration,[12] as well as a Declaration on the Guiding Principles on Drug Demand Reduction[13] and measures to enhance international cooperation to counter the world drug problem.[14] The Political Declaration sets out a global strategy to reduce both supply and demand of illicit drugs. Member States undertook to ensure that women and men benefit equally from drug control strategies. The Declaration on the Guiding Principles on Drug Demand Reduction explicitly states that demand reduction policies should be sensitive to both culture and gender and that programmes should be effective, relevant and accessible to those groups most at risk, taking into account differences in gender, culture and education.

26. As follow-up to the special session, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its forty-second session, held at Vienna from 16 to 25 March 1999, recommended to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council a draft action plan for the implementation of the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction. The action plan would offer guidance to Member States in implementing the commitments of the Declaration and would focus on the need to design demand reduction campaigns and programmes to meet the needs of the population in general, as well as those of specific population groups, taking into account differences in gender, culture and education and paying special attention to youth. The action plan would state that demand reduction efforts should be developed with the participation of target groups, giving special attention to a gender perspective.

D. Commission on Human Rights

27. The agenda of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Human Rights (22 March to 30 April 1999) included for the first time an item entitled "Integration of the human rights of women and the gender perspective", with violence against women as a sub-item (item 12). The Commission adopted three resolutions specific to women's enjoyment of their human rights, and also addressed the rights and situation of the girl child. Gender issues formed part of a number of resolutions dealing with the work of human rights treaty bodies and of country-specific and thematic rapporteurs.

28. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women and a Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women addressed the Commission during consideration of item 12. The Special Adviser welcomed the inclusion of a specific item on the human rights of women on the Commission's agenda, but underlined its responsibility to integrate a gender perspective into all items on its agenda. She also focused on the implementation of the joint work plan of the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat and the Office

of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights which was before the Commission (E/CN.4/1999/67/Add.1 and E/CN.6/1999/2 and Add.1).

1. Women's enjoyment of human rights

29. In its resolution 1999/41 on integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system, the Commission on Human Rights called upon all relevant actors to implement agreed conclusions 1997/2 and 1998/2 of the Economic and Social Council. The goal of universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination by the year 2000 was reiterated, and support was expressed for the early entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention following action by the General Assembly. The Commission called for further strengthening of cooperation to promote women's human rights more effectively, including through systematic gender mainstreaming by all human rights mechanisms. It requested the continued preparation of the joint work plan between the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat and the Office of the High Commissioner. Human rights mechanisms were encouraged to contribute to the special session of the General Assembly, in June 2000, to review and appraise the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Commission also expressed its determination to integrate a gender perspective into all its agenda items.

30. In its resolution 1999/40 on traffic in women and girls, the Commission invited Governments to take measures aimed at eliminating trafficking in women, and to assist women victims of trafficking. United Nations bodies and organizations were called upon to continue their activities in this field. In resolution 1999/42 the Commission commended the Special Rapporteur on violence against women for her work; called upon Governments to undertake specific measures for the prevention and elimination of violence against women; and urged human rights mechanisms to give consideration to this issue in their work, as well as to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur. Emphasis was placed on the need to fully implement obligations under the Convention with regard to violence against women.

2. Gender issues in the work of human rights treaty bodies, thematic rapporteurs and other mechanisms

31. In several resolutions, the Commission called upon Special Rapporteurs, including those on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (1999/35), on religious intolerance (1999/39), and the working group on enforced or involuntary disappearances (1999/38), to apply a gender perspective in their work, including in information collection and the formulation of recommendations, and through the identification of gender-specific abuses. Several were invited to exchange views and cooperate with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women.

32. In resolution 1999/36 on freedom of opinion and expression, the Commission drew attention to the existing gap for women in the effective enjoyment of that right. It urged Governments to implement effective measures to eliminate the atmosphere of fear that prevented women victims of violence from communicating freely on their own behalf, or through intermediaries, and to ensure that women exercising those rights were not discriminated against in such areas as employment, housing and social services. The Commission invited the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right of freedom of opinion and expression to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women in considering obstacles that impeded women's ability to make informed choices in areas of particular importance to them, as well as in areas related to the general decision-making processes in the societies in which they live. The Commission urged States to combat practices of religious intolerance that violated the human rights of women and discriminated against them (resolution 1999/39).

33. In its resolution 1999/32, the Commission invited the Special Rapporteur on torture to continue to examine questions concerning torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment directed against women and conditions conducive to such torture and to make appropriate recommendations concerning prevention and redress of gender-specific forms of torture, including through rape or any form of sexual violence.

34. In its resolution 1999/47, the Commission welcomed the specific attention paid by the Representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons to the special assistance, protection and development needs of internally displaced women and children and encouraged him to continue to draw attention to those needs. In establishing a Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants in its resolution 1999/44, the Commission included among the Rapporteur's functions the application of a gender perspective when requesting and analysing information, and attention to the occurrence of multiple discrimination and violence against migrant women.

3. Attention to gender in issue-specific resolutions

35. The Commission highlighted the situation of women, or particular forms of human rights violations suffered by women, in conjunction with several issues and stressed the importance of systematically taking into account a gender perspective when dealing with such issues or topics. For example, in resolution 1999/24 on the right to food, the Commission noted that more than 800 million people, especially women and children, did not have enough food to meet their basic nutritional needs. Attention was drawn to the needs of women and children as the most vulnerable groups concerning the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and United Nations agencies were invited to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, particularly with regard to girls' right to education (resolution 1999/25). Treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, were invited to take into account the question of extreme poverty and human rights (resolution 1999/26), and the report of the Special Rapporteur on this question was to be made available to the Commission on the Status of Women. In a decision addressed to the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities concerning the establishment of a Social Forum, the Commission identified as one of the objectives of the Forum the examination of the relationship between income distribution, the feminization of poverty and human rights at both the international and national levels (resolution 1999/53). The need to apply a gender perspective in the implementation of the right to development was affirmed, *inter alia*, by ensuring that women played an active role in the development process through full participation on a basis of equality in all spheres of society (resolution 1999/79).

36. In its resolution 1999/27 on human rights and terrorism, the Commission deplored the suffering of innocent victims, including women and children. The arbitrary deprivation of nationality on grounds including gender was also identified as a violation of human rights (resolution 1999/28. The need to combat impunity for violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including those perpetrated against women, was called for (resolution 1999/34). In addressing contemporary forms of slavery (resolution 1999/46), the Commission highlighted trafficking and sexual exploitation of women. The importance of systematically adopting a gender-based approach throughout the preparations for and in the outcome of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance was stressed (resolution 1999/78).

37. The need for measures to eliminate stigmatization of and discrimination against women infected and affected by HIV/AIDS was addressed in resolution 1999/49, and human rights mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, were called upon to integrate the protection of HIV-related human rights in their work.

38. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was encouraged to establish a guideline on gender inclusivity in all official languages of the United Nations, for use in the preparation of all its communications, reports and publications (resolution 1999/60). Member States also were urged to develop comprehensive and sustainable national plans of action for human rights education and public information complementary to those relating to women. The establishment, within such plans, of public access to human rights resource and training centres capable of engaging in gender-sensitive training of trainers was encouraged.

39. In resolution 1999/62 States were invited to promote a culture of peace based, *inter alia*, on the wider participation of women and equal opportunities for all and, in resolution 1999/64 the Commission identified human rights education as an important vehicle for the elimination of gender-based discrimination and for ensuring equal opportunities through the promotion and protection of the human rights of women. Relevant organs, bodies and agencies of the United Nations system were called upon to provide training in the human rights of women for all United Nations personnel and officials.

40. The protection and promotion of the rights of the girl child were comprehensively addressed, and the further mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all policies and programmes relating to children was called for (resolution 1999/80). In the context of armed conflict, States were urged to protect women and children from all acts of gender-based violence, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, sexual exploitation and forced pregnancy. The need for humanitarian responses to address the special reproductive health needs of girls and women, including those arising from pregnancy as a result of rape, sexual mutilation, childbirth at an early age or infection with sexually transmitted diseases was emphasized and gender-sensitized education programmes for armed forces and civilian police were called for. Specific dangers faced by girls in conjunction with child labour were highlighted. The agreed conclusions on women and health adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women were welcomed. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was commended for the high priority it accorded to education for all, in particular girls' education. Educational institutions and the

United Nations system were called upon to develop and implement gender-sensitive strategies to address the particular needs of the girl child in education.

4. Country-specific resolutions

41. The Commission requested several country rapporteurs, including those on Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Sudan, Myanmar, Equatorial Guinea and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to apply a gender perspective systematically in the reporting process, including in information collection and recommendations. A number of country-specific resolutions referred to gender as a factor in the enjoyment of human rights:

(a) Afghanistan (resolution 1999/9): recalling resolutions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women, expressing its deep concern about the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, and taking into account the report of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women on her visit to Afghanistan in November 1997, the Commission condemned the continuing grave violations of the human rights of women and girls. It urged all the Afghan parties, in particular the Taliban, to bring to an end all violations of the human rights of women and girls in areas such as their participation in public life, in work and employment, education, security of person, freedom of movement and access to social services. The repeal of all legislative and other measures that discriminated against women was called for. Specific follow-up action was addressed to the Secretary-General, the Special Rapporteur, the Member States and the international community concerning the human rights of women and girls and the application of a gender perspective, including the implementation of the recommendations of the inter-agency gender mission to Afghanistan of November 1997;

(b) Islamic Republic of Iran (resolution 1999/13): the positive statements by the Government about the need to review laws and attitudes that discriminated against women, and the gradual increase of the presence of women in public life in the Islamic Republic of Iran were noted. The Commission expressed its concern at the continued lack of full and equal enjoyment by women of their human rights, and called upon the Government to take further measures to eliminate the continued discrimination in law and in practice against women;

(c) Sudan (resolution 1999/15): the Commission expressed its deep concern at the adverse effect of the current conflict on the civilian population, in particular women and children, such as the abduction of women and children to be subjected to forced labour or similar conditions. It called upon the Government to investigate reports of such abductions in southern Sudan and to accept a multilateral investigation into the causes of those abductions, as well as ways and means for eradicating the practice;

(d) Myanmar (resolution 1999/17): the Commission welcomed Myanmar's accession to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. It deplored the continuing abuse of women and children by Government agents, the violations of the rights of women, especially women who were refugees, internally displaced women and women belonging to ethnic minorities of the political opposition, in particular forced labour, sexual violence and exploitation, including rape. It urged the Government to put an end to such violations, and to fulfil its obligations under the Convention;

(e) Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (resolution 1999/18): in referring to Kosovo, the Commission condemned ongoing war crimes and abuses of human rights resulting in rape and harsh living conditions for the civilian population. It insisted that the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) improve the situation of ethnic Albanian women and children. Referring to the Republic of Croatia, the Commission endorsed the Special Rapporteur's recommendation for affirmative measures to improve the representation of women in decision-making positions;

(f) Equatorial Guinea (resolution 1999/19): the Government was encouraged to continue its efforts to integrate women effectively into the process of socio-economic, cultural and political development of the country;

(g) Rwanda (resolution 1999/20): the Government was urged, and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda invited, to give utmost priority to the prosecution and punishment of crimes of sexual violence committed against women, and the decision of the Tribunal to give a broad definition to acts of sexual violence was welcomed. The Government's proposal to ensure greater legal access of women to their husbands' and parents' property through the proposed law on matrimonial property and succession was welcomed;

(h) Democratic Republic of the Congo (resolution 1999/56): the Commission expressed its concern at reports of sexual violence against women and children and the forcible recruitment and use of children as soldiers and combatants, and called upon all parties to respect the rights of women;

(i) Somalia (resolution 1999/75): the Commission expressed its deep concern at reports of violence against women and children, and condemned widespread violations and abuses of human rights and humanitarian law, in particular against minorities, women and children;

(j) Cambodia (resolution 1999/76): the Commission welcomed recent governmental measures to improve the status of women, and urged the Government to take all necessary steps, including technical assistance, to eliminate discrimination against women, including in political and public life, to combat violence against women in all its forms, and to take steps to meet its obligations under the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;

(k) Haiti (resolution 1999/77): the Commission noted with gratitude the report of the independent expert (A/53/355), welcoming in particular his analysis of and attention to the issues affecting the enjoyment by women of their human rights, including violence against women. It called upon the Government, in collaboration with women's groups and the international community, to put in place measures to address violence against women, including the development of training programmes for judicial and legal personnel and the incorporation of the human rights of women in all levels of the education system.

E. Commission on Sustainable Development

42. The Commission on Sustainable Development held its seventh session from 19 to 30 April 1999 with the main focus on the sustainable use of oceans and seas, consumption and production patterns, sustainable tourism and the problems facing small island developing States.

43. The Commission recommended, *inter alia*, the expansion of the United Nations guidelines on consumer protection to include sustainable consumption. It was also decided that the goal of changing consumer behaviour patterns should be pursued by all countries in full compliance with Agenda 21[15] and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21.[16] Poverty eradication was reaffirmed as an important issue in the work programme of the Commission. Notably, no specific recommendations pertaining to gender and consumption patterns were approved.

44. The Commission invited Governments, major groups, one of which is women, and the United Nations system, to work together in order to increase the benefits from tourism for the host countries and maintain cultural and environmental integrity. The United Nations Secretariat and the World Tourism Organization were invited to facilitate the establishment of an ad hoc open-ended working group on tourism with one of the goals being to maximize benefits for indigenous and local communities.

F. Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

45. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, meeting at Vienna from 27 April to 6 May 1999, addressed issues of particular relevance to women or concerning a gender perspective in several draft resolutions it recommended for adoption by the Economic and Social Council, and the General Assembly. Mechanisms for crime prevention concerning domestic violence, and trafficking in persons, especially women and children would be analysed by a planned interregional expert group meeting (E/CN.15/1999/L.3/Rev.1). The Council would welcome the Commission's resolution 7/1 to mainstream a gender perspective into all its activities, as well as into the work of the Centre for International Crime Prevention (E/CN.15/1999/L.5/Rev.1). The need to mainstream a gender perspective would be underlined in particular with regard to programmes relating to children and young people in the criminal justice system (E/CN.15/1999/L.7/Rev.1). A draft Vienna Declaration on Crime and Justice, to be transmitted to the tenth Crime Congress, would commit Member States to the incorporation of a gender perspective into national and international crime prevention and criminal justice strategies. They would also commit themselves to the development of action-oriented policy recommendations based on the special needs of women as criminal justice practitioners, victims, prisoners and offenders. The same draft addressed trafficking in human beings, especially women and children (E/CN.15/1999/L.8/Rev.1). In conjunction with the preparation of the draft convention against transnational organized crime and the protocols thereto, the draft protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in women and children would be made applicable to all persons so as to promote gender equality (E/CN.15/1999/L.9).

G. Statistical Commission

46. Although the Statistical Commission, at its thirtieth session, held from 1 to 5 March 1999 did not consider gender as a specific topic, gender issues and sex-disaggregated data were among the main topics discussed, including two papers

on "Harmonization and rationalization of development indicators in the United Nations system" (E/CN.3/1999/14), and "Progress report on demographic, social and migration statistics" (E/CN.3/1999/9). The latter reviewed recent work of the Statistics Division in the field of gender statistics.

IV. Activities of the regional commissions

A. Economic Commission for Africa

47. In 1997, the African Centre for Women at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) began organizing subregional level follow-up meetings on the implementation of the African Platform for Action and the Beijing Platform for Action. Meetings were held in June 1998 for the Central Africa region, in October 1998 for the North Africa region and in February 1999, for the Eastern and Southern Africa region. The first two meetings emphasized the formulation and assessment of national action plans, and the third the mid-term evaluation process and the need for follow-up on the recommendations of the ECA conference held in April 1998 on the theme "African women and economic development: investing in our future".

B. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

48. At its second session, held in April 1999, the Committee on Social Development, a subsidiary committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), adopted recommendations concerning implementation of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the integrated follow-up to global conferences.

49. During the period under review, ESCWA provided advisory services, upon request, to Yemen, Palestine, Qatar, Oman, Jordan and Lebanon in institution- and capacity-building for national machineries for women and non-governmental organizations concerned with women's issues and gender equality. Technical assistance in the preparation of national reports on progress achieved in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action for submission to the General Assembly at its special session in June 2000 was also provided.

50. ESCWA is building a gender-sensitive database on information and social policies and measures of impact on women, gender and family issues, and is developing region-specific indicators for monitoring progress achieved in the advancement of women and gender equality. ESCWA has focused on advocating innovative approaches to poverty alleviation of poor women in rural and urban areas, including through the establishment of micro-credit facilities.

51. ESCWA carried out surveys on the role of non-governmental organizations in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and the Arab Plan of Action and is also coordinating its efforts with other United Nations agencies concerned with women and gender equality. It has implemented joint activities with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and other agencies. In collaboration with the League of Arab States and UNIFEM, ESCWA convened a regional meeting in Beirut from 15 to 18 December 1998 to follow up on the Beijing Conference and to prepare for the special session of the General Assembly in June 2000.

52. In 1998, the Executive Secretary of ESCWA established an ad hoc working group to formulate a plan of action for mainstreaming a gender perspective into policies, plans and programmes of ESCWA. In pursuance of the Plan of Action, an overall coordinator for ESCWA has been designated and gender focal points have been designated in each division; gender mainstreaming has been introduced on a gradual and phased basis into the planning and programming process in ESCWA; and work-months have been earmarked for gender activities to facilitate monitoring and evaluation of the process. Capacity-building and a gender training package for all ESCWA staff (senior and middle management, regional advisers, Professionals and General Service supervisory staff) will be introduced during the last quarter of 1999 and until the end of 2001.

C. Economic Commission for Europe

53. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) will hold a meeting of all United Nations and non-United Nations organizations active in issues of women's advancement and gender equality in the ECE region to review the progress made and obstacles encountered in the work of participating agencies in their respective fields of competence.

54. At the intergovernmental level, ECE will convene a meeting to review economic issues, problems and policies relating to the situation of women in ECE countries. Other issues will also be addressed according to the respective interests and work areas of other organizations to be involved in the preparation of the meeting, in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Commission and the Council of Europe. On the

occasion of the 2000 review, ECE will produce a major publication on women and men in Europe and North America, providing data and trends which have been developed since the Fourth World Conference on Women.

D. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

55. As a follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action, the second phase of the two-year project on institutionalizing the gender perspective in the substantive work of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was initiated in the first part of 1999. This project, which aims to strengthen and consolidate an institutional approach, will further the work of the pilot project executed during the second half of 1997 with the collaboration of the German Agency for Technical Cooperation, which sought to mainstream the gender perspective explicitly and systematically into the work of ECLAC. This phase will primarily focus on cooperation for development by fostering a similar process in the sectoral ministries of selected Member States.

56. ECLAC has concentrated on the systematic development of gender indicators, with emphasis on the strategic areas identified in the Platform for Action and the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995–2001, with the aim of assisting Governments in the region to formulate public policies from a gender perspective and to evaluate the implementation of the commitments and agreements undertaken. As a result, ECLAC has prepared a reference document on gender indicators for the follow-up and assessment of the Platform for Action and the Regional Programme of Action to be distributed at the regional level by mid-May 1999.

E. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

57. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has focused on women and the economy in a changing global environment, women and poverty, violence against women, women and the economy, human rights of women and women and media, in accordance with the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action for the Advancement of the Women in Asia and the Pacific and the Beijing Platform for Action. A high-level meeting to review the implementation of the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action and regional implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is planned from 26 to 29 October 1999 in Bangkok. An expert group meeting on the regional implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was held at Bangkok on 1 and 2 April 1999, where the provisional agenda of the high-level meeting and the background documents to facilitate deliberations were discussed.

58. A plan of action for promoting women in small businesses was adopted at a subregional workshop held in Viet Nam, which called for concrete action on such issues as credit, marketing, technology, networking and reform of the legal and regulatory framework. A regional meeting on the impact of globalization on women held at Bangkok examined the implications of globalization, focusing on women and economic liberalization, technological change and female migration, while adaptive policies and programmes were formulated.

59. A project on the promotion of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women through non-governmental organizations of networks in the Pacific was launched in 1998, and has been effectively supporting non-governmental organizations in their awareness-raising activities at the grass roots. ESCAP support to the Pacific on promotion of the Convention was further facilitated by co-organizing a consultative meeting with UNDP and the Pacific Community on the implementation of the Convention and promoting women's rights. A Regional Conference on Trafficking in Women was held at Bangkok, at which the Bangkok Accord and Plan of Action was adopted.

60. A handbook promoting the use of communication and information technology as a tool for women's empowerment and containing practical training material on information and communication mechanisms was produced and has been much appreciated by users. Activities under the Women's Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (WINAP) continued through the biannual *WINAP Newsletter* and the Women in Development (WID) home page. Within ESCAP, a staff training on incorporating gender issues into project planning and design was held to introduce the concept of gender mainstreaming and foster discussion on its importance, particularly in the context of the United Nation's goals and policies.

V. Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality of the Administrative Committee on Coordination

61. The fourth session of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality took place at United Nations Headquarters from 23 to 26 February 1999. The Committee's activities were previously reported in documents E/1998/53, and E/CN.6/1999/2. The Committee uses a system of task managers for inter-sessional work on its ongoing activities and their reports formed the basis of the Committee's decisions.

62. For the first time, the Committee held a one-day dialogue with resident coordinators and agency field representatives around implementation of the Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming. The dialogue was intended to strengthen the knowledge base with regard to field-level implementation of gender-specific conference recommendations. Field-based representatives participated in the workshop, from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF, UNDP, UNIFEM, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The Committee decided to include a regular item on its agenda to review the extent to which implementation of the Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming were reflected in common country assessments and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process, to be based on feedback from the field and analysis provided by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Sub-Group on Gender.

63. Four topics were discussed during the workshop: (a) opportunities and constraints to track and measure progress in gender equality: the example of common country assessments; (b) mainstreaming a gender perspective into all thematic groups and inter-agency activities at the national level — examples and best/worst practices; (c) the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process and inter-agency activities, their strengths and weaknesses for integrating follow-up to Beijing; and (d) networking for, and monitoring implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (local partnerships; reporting on women and gender issues to Headquarters; tapping resources available in the United Nations system beyond one's own agency — the role of the Committee). Based on panel presentations by resident coordinators and agency field representatives and follow-up discussions, the Committee adopted a set of conclusions and recommendations. These were subsequently submitted to the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions as input into its ongoing work on operational questions. The Committee also invited the Sub-Group on Gender to bring them to the attention of UNDG.

64. The Committee approved the prototype format for the database of good practices on implementation of the Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming. By early 1999, the task force had received approximately 60 submissions from United Nations entities for possible inclusion in the database. After further refinement of the information provided, all cases that meet at least some of the criteria set by the Committee will be included in the electronic database that will be hosted through the inter-agency Web site (WomenWatch). The Committee will also develop a publication of not more than 20 cases of selected good practices, to be produced for the special session of the General Assembly in June 2000. The publication will aim to communicate examples of United Nations accomplishments in implementing the Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming.

65. The Committee noted progress made in the preparation of the study on the WID/gender focal point function, and its completion by the end of the year. The study is also expected to provide insights into management commitment to gender mainstreaming, and thus constitutes a further follow-up to the agreed conclusions 1997/2 of the Economic and Social Council. The Committee also decided that work on budget codes and financial monitoring systems should continue, with a view to developing guidelines for financial monitoring including budget codes in support of gender equality, for submission and action by the Committee at its fifth session.

66. The issue of gender impact analysis will receive priority attention in preparation for the fifth session. This work will initially focus on the organizational level of gender mainstreaming, and on the project level, both nationally and sectorally. Further consideration will be given as to whether, and how, gender impact analysis in normative work should be added in the future. The Committee's objectives in this area are: (a) to establish a framework for inter-agency work; (b) to exchange experiences among Committee members on current practices and methodologies used; and (c) to improve gender impact analysis to influence policies. The Committee also continued work on a two-part statement by the Administrative Committee on Coordination as input into the special session of the General Assembly in June 2000. Part one will be a short policy statement presenting the system's outlook on gender equality in the

twenty-first century; and part two will consist of supporting analysis and practical steps and measures for translating the policy statement into practice.

67. The Committee's secretariat, as well as its activities, are accommodated within the regular workload of its members. These activities have been implemented in a collaborative manner by members through task forces and task managers. Several of the Committee's activities, however, have been delayed because of lack of resources. Consequently, the Committee established a task force, to be chaired by the Division for the Advancement of Women, to develop a funding strategy for the Committee's projects and activities. It will also undertake a survey of the resource base of other mechanisms of the Administrative Committee on Coordination.

68. The Committee submitted a proposal to the Commission on the Status of Women for a two-phased preparation of the new system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 2002–2005, currently requested to be prepared for the year 2000 (see Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/34). A first phase, to be submitted to the Commission and the Council in 2000, would consist of an assessment of activities undertaken by the United Nations system, of obstacles encountered, and lessons learned from the present plan, and the system-wide process of its implementation. A second phase, to be submitted to the Council through the Commission in 2001, would be prepared in the light of the results of the special session of the General Assembly in June 2000. This suggestion was taken up by the Commission, and a draft resolution on this matter is before the Council for action.[17]

69. The Committee will convene a workshop on the topic of women's empowerment in the context of human security, tentatively scheduled to take place in mid-December 1999 at Bangkok. The workshop will explore challenges to women's human security — such as protection from physical and mental harm, freedom from fear and want — in the context of present global and regional realities; and how a focus on the various elements of human security can contribute to strengthening women's empowerment.

70. The Committee continued its efforts to strengthen links with other mechanisms of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, in particular the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions. It held a discussion with the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in his capacity as Chairperson of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and CCPOQ on areas, and means, for strengthening attention to gender consideration in the work of those committees.

71. The fifth session of the Committee will take place at United Nations Headquarters from 1 to 3 March 2000.

Notes

[1] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1.

[2] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1999, Supplement No. 7* (E/1999/27), chap. I, sect. B, resolution IV, sect. I.

[3] Ibid., sect. II.

[4] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[5] General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.

[6] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/52/3), chap. IV, sect. A, para. 4.

[7] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1999, Supplement No. 7* (E/1999/27), chap. I, sect. B.

[8] Ibid., sect. D.

[9] Ibid., sect. A.

[10] Ibid., *Supplement No. 6* (E/1999/26), chap. I, sect. D, resolution 37/1.

[11] Ibid., *Supplement No. 5* (E/1999/25), chap. I.

[12] General Assembly resolution S-20/2, annex.

[13] General Assembly resolution S-20/3, annex.

[14] General Assembly resolution S-20/4.

[15] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex II.

[16] General Assembly resolution S/19–2, annex.

[17] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1999, Supplement No. 7* (E/1999/27), chap. I, sect. B, draft resolution III.

United Nations E/1999/55

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
24 May 1999

Original: English

Substantive session of 1999
Geneva, 5–30 July 1999
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*
Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation

Poverty eradication, capacity-building, resources and funding, and the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes

Report of the Secretary-General

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–5	3
II.	Poverty eradication	6–79	3
	A. Context	6–17	3
	B. Principles	18–22	7
	C. Approaches	23–57	8
	D. Coordination	58–71	22
	E. Evaluation	72–77	25
	F. Recommendations	78–79	27
III.	Capacity-building	80–104	28
	A. Initial follow-up to resolution 53/192	98–100	31

* E/1999/100.

99-15633 (E) 250699

	B.	Recommendations	101–104	31
IV.		Resources and funding	105–124	32
		Recommendations	124	37
V.		United Nations funds and programmes: oversight role of the Council	125–150	37
	A.	General issues	125–127	37
	B.	Annual reports of the heads of the United Nations funds and programmes to the Council	128–129	38
	C.	Concise consolidated list of issues	130	38
	D.	Joint and concurrent meetings of the executive boards	131	39
	E.	Joint meetings of the bureaux of the Council and the executive boards	132–134	39
	F.	Timing of the annual sessions of the executive boards	135	40
	G.	Resources	136–141	40
	H.	Overview of decisions taken, main agenda items of the executive boards since the 1998 regular session of the Council, and agendas for annual sessions	142	41
	I.	Recommendations	143–150	45

Tables

1.	Some of the principal decisions adopted by the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes since the substantive session of 1997 of the Council	42
2.	Some of the principal items on the agendas of the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes since the 1997 substantive session of the Council	43
3.	Main items of the provisional agendas for the 1999 annual sessions of the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes	44

Boxes

1.	Poverty eradication as a priority for a selection of United Nations system organizations	9
2.	The 20/20 Initiative	14
3.	Basic social services for all	16

I. Introduction

1. The operational activities for development of the United Nations system are continuing to undergo significant reforms. In this task, the policy directives of General Assembly resolution 53/192 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of 15 December 1998 are playing a central role. They endorsed a number of initiatives launched as part of the Secretary-General's reform process, and as part of the implementation of previous policy directives of the Assembly (notably resolutions 44/211, 47/199 and 50/120). To capture in an integrated and comprehensive manner the principal changes within the United Nations system is the intent of the present report and its addendum 1.

2. The process of organizational change within the system is taking place in a context of significant global and strategic challenges for operational activities for development, which were reviewed in the introduction of the report of the Secretary-General for the triennial review (A/53/226). These challenges and the country-specific orientations of operational activities require continued flexibility and adaptability, as well as a large degree of delegated authority. They also require a judicious balance between the requirements of change and reform emanating from central directives, and the need to "get on with the job" at the country level. Preliminary indications are that while many reforms can be incorporated into country-level responsibilities within existing resources, in a number of cases the introduction of new initiatives and new ways of conducting activities and increasing their coordination represent a significant additional workload. Moreover, they take place in a context of declining or stagnant resources, with unfortunate consequences for projects and programmes. To redress this situation must be one of the principal concerns.

3. Sections II and III of the present report review in some detail the two issues of poverty eradication and capacity-building, selected in paragraph 62 of General Assembly resolution 53/192 and Economic and Social Council decision 1998/299 as themes for the operational activities segment of the substantive session of 1999 of the Council. As concerns poverty eradication, section II reviews the current situation, with a focus on country-level activities, and recommends practical steps to help achieve the goal of poverty eradication as agreed at the World Summit for Social Development and in General Assembly resolution 51/178 on the First United Nations Decade on the Eradication of Poverty.

4. The capacity-building part of the report (section III) describes how the issue has evolved over the last 30 years and the actions taken or proposed to be taken in the implementation of the relevant decisions of General Assembly resolution 53/192. Concrete decisions of the Council on these important themes will help in their coherent and coordinated implementation by the United Nations system.

5. Sections IV and V deal with resources and funding and the oversight role of the Council in relation to the funds and programmes and their executive boards. The reforms of the United Nations development cooperation place emphasis on the oversight role and responsibility of the Council.

II. Poverty eradication

A. Context

6. This chapter provides an assessment of the country-level role of operational activities for development in poverty eradication. Questions of global poverty trends and general policy are not covered here, since they are dealt with in the Secretary-General's report for

the high-level segment of the Council on "The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women".[1]

7. When in February 1997, the General Assembly launched the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997–2006), it stated that "eradicating poverty is an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind".[2] The objective of the Decade is "to achieve the goal of eradicating absolute poverty and reducing overall poverty substantially in the world".[3] Over the past few years, the United Nations has undertaken several initiatives in the area of poverty eradication at the global level[4] with the aim of increasing the attention of Governments to commitments, recommendations and measures agreed to alleviate poverty and highlighting policies, which pursue a more equitable distribution of income and wealth, generate increased opportunities for the poor and expand support to a longer-term, sustained effort for poverty eradication. Moreover, it was clearly anticipated that the development arm of the United Nations system would play a key role in translating these normative decisions into practical programmes in support of national poverty eradication programmes.

8. To place the operational activities for development into their current context, it should be recalled that poverty affects over 1.3 billion people. There is a largely shared concern for the implications of globalization processes and the widespread introduction of economic reforms on the social conditions of the poor. Poverty eradication is, thus, the principal challenge of the international community at the dawn of the twenty-first century. It is a global objective of the United Nations system.[5] The General Assembly has stressed the central role of the United Nations system in supporting developing countries in their efforts to achieve the objectives set forth at the World Summit for Social Development.[6] In addition, other United Nations conferences and summits have called on the system to focus on poverty eradication.[7]

---

[1] That report has been prepared under the leadership of the International Labour Organization (ILO) (E/1999/_).

[2] See General Assembly resolution 51/178, para. 3.

[3] Ibid., para. 7.

[4] There is an abundant literature on these initiatives and the present report will make only reference to the documentation available. See, for instance, E/1996/61, in particular sect. III on a harmonized and integrated approach to intergovernmental consideration of poverty eradication. For more updated information, see A/53/329; E/CN.5/1999/3; and E/CN.5/1999/4.

[5] See para. 5 of agreed conclusions 1996/1 of the Council.

[6] See, for example, General Assembly resolution 50/107, preamble, and *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I; for the Programme of Action, see ibid., annex II. The Summit was a fundamental step to define an international strategy for poverty eradication as one of the three overarching objectives of the international community (the others being the achievement of full employment and the promotion of secure, stable and just societies).

[7] The following global conferences should be mentioned, *inter alia*, in addition to the World Summit for Social Development, as relevant for the role of the United Nations system in poverty eradication: World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 5–9 March 1990), World Summit for Children (New York, 29–30 September 1990), United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992), World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 14–25 June 1993), International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 5–13 September 1994), Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 4–15 September 1995), United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) (Istanbul, 3–14 June 1996), World Food Summit (Rome, 13–17 November 1996).

9. In May 1996, the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), recognizing the urgency of translating the commitment of the Summit into facts, reiterated a few objectives indicated by international conferences and identified specific goals to reduce poverty by the year 2015:

(a) A reduction by one-half in the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015;

(b) Universal primary education in all countries by 2015;

(c) Demonstrated progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005;

(d) A reduction by two thirds in the mortality rates for infants and children under the age of five and a reduction by three fourths in maternal mortality, all by 2015;

(e) Access, through the primary health-care system, to reproductive health services for all individuals of appropriate ages no later than the year 2015;

(f) Implementation of national strategies for sustainable development in all countries by 2005, so as to ensure that current trends in the loss of environmental resources are effectively reversed at both global and national level by 2015.

10. In its resolution 1998/44, the Council noted the target of reducing by one half, by 2015, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty, and reaffirmed the urgent need for the timely and full implementation of the commitments agreed upon at the major conferences. It also reiterated that poverty eradication is a key development objective for the Council's efforts to ensure integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences.[8] it stressed the need of mobilizing new and additional resources from all sources for implementing conference outcomes, including through progress of the 20/20 Initiative in interested countries.[9]

11. At the end of the twentieth century, while encouraging results have been recorded in the last 50 years in terms of declining income poverty and increases of life expectancy, nutrition, health and education[10] and a certain degree of optimism for achieving the 2015 goals was anticipated until 1998,[11] expectations have recently become more cautious due to the economic slowdown in many developing countries.[12] Doubts have been raised by the President of the World Bank, in his foreword to *World Development Indicators, 1999*, whether or not those 2015 targets are achievable in prevailing circumstances, both globally and at the country level. This justifies a renewed attention on the role of the United Nations system's operational activities for development in poverty eradication.

[8] See Council resolution 1998/44, paras. 1 and 2.

[9] See box 2 on the 20/20 Initiative.

[10] See the report of the Secretary-General on the role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women for the high-level segment (E/1999/_).

[11] See, for example, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Overcoming Human Poverty* (New York, 1998); and Lionel Demery and Michael Walton, *Are Poverty and Social Goals for the Twenty-first Century Attainable?* (World Bank, 1998).

[12] See World Bank, *Poverty Reduction and the World Bank: Progress in Fiscal 1998* (Washington, D.C., 1999).

12. A starting point of the review conducted in the present section are the agreed conclusions[13] of the Council's coordination segment of 1996[14] and the statement of commitment for action to eradicate poverty adopted by ACC in May 1998.

Agreed conclusions 1996/1 of the Council

13. Agreed conclusions 1996/1 of the Council were closely aligned with the policy directions of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 at Copenhagen, since poverty eradication is one of the commitments made therein.

14. While confirming the international commitment for poverty eradication and reiterating its concern for the declining resources for development cooperation, the Council focused its 1996 agreed conclusions on the coordination of the United Nations support for poverty eradication. The Council requested the United Nations to help implement the Programme of Action and the Copenhagen Declaration, calling on the organizations of the system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, to coordinate more fully the support that they provide to Governments in their national efforts to eradicate poverty.

15. As stressed by the Summit, the resident coordinator system is expected to play an important role in promoting coordination at the country level, and the Council highlighted, within that system, coordination mechanisms, such as thematic groups, the common country assessment, the country strategy note and the field-level committee.[15] The Council also stressed the need to build national analytical capacities on poverty and integrate a gender perspective into poverty-related policies and programmes. It recognized the country specificity of poverty eradication strategies, the key roles of the Government and civil society, the empowerment of local communities, the complementary role of the United Nations system and the need to ensure the participation of all system organizations.

ACC statement of commitment for action to eradicate poverty

16. In May 1998, following the work of its inter-agency task forces, ACC adopted a statement of commitment for action to eradicate poverty,[16] in which ACC emphasized that poverty is a denial of choices and opportunity, a violation of human dignity. It recognized that the world has the resources and the capacity, if it chooses, to eradicate absolute poverty,

[13] See agreed conclusions 1996/1 of the Council.

[14] The Council has contributed to the intergovernmental dialogue on poverty eradication also through its subsidiary machinery, in particular its functional commissions. The Commission for Social Development, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Sustainable Development, and other functional commissions, have addressed poverty issues in several occasions, reaching relevant deliberations. The Commission for Social Development, in particular, focused on social services for all, the need to improve access to productive resources and infrastructure and the need to expand productive employment. It also addressed the vulnerability and social integration and participation of the poor. See, for example, *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 9* (E/1996/29).

[15] As defined in paragraph 40 of General Assembly resolution 47/199 and paragraph 41 of Assembly resolution 50/120.

[16] The statement was submitted to the Council at its substantive session of 1998 under the item "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits" (see E/1998/73).

and reiterated the supporting and catalytic role of the United Nations system in mobilizing the energies and resources of all development actors in the campaign against poverty. It recognized that education and capacity-building are major driving forces in development and highlighted gender equality and the empowerment of women as major cross-cutting themes in poverty eradication.

17. The statement also outlined the elements for a shared strategy for poverty eradication, identifying the need for: (a) full involvement of the Government and all other development actors; (b) transparency and accountability, good governance, protection of human rights, people's empowerment; (c) accelerated and sustained economic growth; (d) economic growth to be equitable, employment-intensive and pro-poor; (e) sustainable development, taking into account the links among population pressures, natural resources, food security, ill-health and poverty; (f) human development, improving access to shelter and basic social services; (g) empowerment, participation, capacity-building and targeted assistance; (h) favourable micro-level environment; and (i) involvement of the poor in designing anti-poverty strategies.

B. Principles

18. A fundamental precept of operational activities is that the primary responsibility for the articulation and implementation of national strategies for poverty eradication rests with the country concerned, and practical action must take place with the support of local communities. Operational activities must, therefore, be in a position to adapt themselves to specific national and local situations in a well-coordinated and mutually supportive manner. Therefore, United Nations system activities in support to poverty eradication, while taking into account broad common objectives, are expected to be based on country-specific circumstances and decisions made by national authorities. This approach is consistent with agreed conclusions 1996/1 of the Council.

19. The role of the United Nations system often consists of assisting Governments in translating global goals into national development policies and programmes, according poverty eradication a top priority. In so doing, the system constantly stresses the special needs of the most vulnerable groups, the underprivileged, the marginalized, the excluded, the discriminated, the absolute poor, which calls for targeted actions and policies aimed at particular groups, such as women, children, the elderly, indigenous people, refugees, rural population, urban slum dwellers, unemployed or underemployed.

20. This type of upstream support also includes the formulation of specific strategies for social development, which have a direct bearing on poverty eradication. Support in the policy area may also involve a review of the implications of a wide range of policies on the most vulnerable segments of the population, thus making them sensitive to the needs of the poor.

21. Most importantly, the United Nations system supports activities in direct assistance to the poor, covering a wide range of areas. One of the values of these activities is often their "demonstration effect" for the wider application and lessons they can yield for this purpose.[17]

[17] See the following section for a few examples. For a more detailed review of these types of poverty-focused interventions, see the background paper prepared by the Division for Social Policy and Development, "Poverty reduction strategies: a review" (ST/ESA/260), sect. III.2; that paper was prepared following a training seminar on poverty reduction strategies held on 9 January 1998.

22. Joint multi-purpose programmes of integrated rural or urban development and poverty eradication are sometimes promoted as umbrella initiatives, which are then implemented through more specific subprogrammes or projects.

C. Approaches

Enhancing national capacities

23. The translation of global mandates of the system in poverty eradication into operational action at the country level is carried out in a variety of ways at the request of Governments (see box 1). The activities of organizations, according to their respective statutory mandates and operational programmes, assist recipient countries in their national efforts to eradicate poverty by strengthening national capacity to define policies, giving a pro-poor orientation to development policies and enhancing the capacities of the poor through direct assistance initiatives. A diversified series of activities materialize the United Nations system's support to poverty eradication, ranging from advocacy initiatives, policy dialogue, information activities, support to formulation of national policies or programmes, analytical activities (poverty assessments or other similar studies, information systems and data banks on poverty) and several measures of direct support to the poor. They include also support to national capacity to analyse and measure poverty, as recommended by the Council in 1996.

Box No. 1
Poverty eradication as a priority for a selection of United Nations system organizations

United Nations

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. A rights-based approach to poverty eradication is highlighted, *inter alia*, by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which stresses that poverty and inequality are considered violation of human rights according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and extreme poverty and social exclusion are a violation of human dignity. Poverty-focused actions, thus, should stem from the fundamental right to development of each human being.

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). The contribution of better human settlements to poverty eradication are highlighted by Habitat, which aims at assisting developing countries in reducing urban poverty in the slums and squatter settlements through improved access to housing, water supply, sanitation, land and security of tenure and other infrastructures and social services.

United Nations programmes and funds

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In 1995, UNDP's Executive Board, while emphasizing that national development priorities shall be the primary determinant of UNDP-supported programmes, made poverty eradication the organization's central priority.[a] To pursue this objective, UNDP has identified a series of corporate goals for poverty reduction: (a) fostering an enabling environment for pro-poor economic growth; (b) securing sustainable livelihoods for the poor through access to productive assets; (c) advancing gender equality and the status of women; (d) ensuring sustainable food security for the poor, including regeneration of the environmental resources on which the poor depend; and (e) supporting pro-poor governance, including empowerment of the poor. UNDP launched several initiatives to make these goals operational, in collaboration with other organizations of the system, including the World Bank, in the attempt to measure and monitor poverty, integrating anti-poverty efforts, implementing participatory approaches and working with the private sector for poverty reduction. A major activity is the *Poverty Strategies Initiative*, aimed at assisting countries in formulating strategies and plans to fight poverty. In addition to the *Human Development Report*, prepared annually, UNDP has intensified its analytical activity focused on poverty at the country level, supporting the preparation of national human development reports. A special UNDP Social Development and Poverty Elimination Division poverty Web site is available.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Since the environmental sustainability and resource use in developing countries are closely linked to social development, poverty reduction and demographic pressure, UNEP's role in promoting poverty eradication stems from its mandate in the environmental area and its links with other areas in the context of sustainable development.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). A poverty focus derives as a top priority from the Convention on the Rights of the Child, since every child has the fundamental right to an adequate standard of living and children are disproportionately represented among the poor. Since UNICEF's mandate is to ensure the survival and protection of women and children and the improvement in their position, its operational focus is basic services in such areas as health, education, nutrition, family planning, water and sanitation, which are key areas to alleviate poverty. Geographical coverage of UNICEF's normative work also includes child poverty in industrialized countries. Special emphasis, together with the ILO, is on activities to combat child labour.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Its mandate aims at widening choices and opportunities in the various population and reproductive health programmes, encouraging Governments to invest in human capital. UNFPA recognizes that poverty has a significant influence on, and is influenced by demographic parameters: this is why highest priority is given to allocation of resources to, and programming activities in, the poorest countries and the poorest segments of the population. UNFPA advocates for priority attention to the allocation of domestic resources for poverty alleviation and the provision of basic social services.

World Food Programme (WFP). WFP addresses a key constraint to the eradication of poverty, assisting the poor in emerging from the hunger trap, providing differentiated means to prevent and combat food shortages, often integrated with other organizations' interventions focused on the most vulnerable populations.

United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP). Its activities in the area of alternative development, i.e., the provision of alternative sources of livelihood for those currently dependent on income from the illicit cultivation of opium or coca bush, can be considered also as poverty alleviation measures, since such illicit cultivation occurs in remote rural areas often afflicted by long-term poverty problems.

Specialized agencies and related organizations

International Labour Organization (ILO). One of the three major objectives of the ILO is to promote employment and combat poverty, and is translated into the promotion of anti-poverty strategies based on job creation, in collaboration with other agencies of the system and the Bretton Woods institutions.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The link of food security with poverty eradication was highlighted by the World Food Summit (Rome, 1996) and is one of the highest priorities for FAO, which also stresses the link of agricultural development and poverty of rural population.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Its General Conference, with resolution 29 C/53, called upon UNESCO to accord high priority to the issue of extreme poverty in the execution of programmes, ensuring that population in situation of extreme poverty and social exclusion are effectively reached.

World Health Organization (WHO). Its specific approach to poverty eradication, both through country-level and global initiatives, reflects the resolution of the World Health Assembly, adopted in 1992, which requested the Director General to ensure that all WHO programmes identify highly vulnerable economic groups and provide the means to improve and evaluate their health status. In 1994 the Task Force on Health in Development stressed the need to improve access to basic social services, protecting the health rights of the vulnerable groups.

World Bank. The World Bank's fundamental objective is to help client countries reduce poverty and improve living standards through a strategy of inclusive development.[b] The three elements of its strategy are: (a) to promote broad-based, labour-demanding growth and increase the productivity and economic opportunities of the poor; (b) to improve the access to basic social services; and (c) to promote safety nets and poverty-targeted programmes for those who cannot take advantage of income-earning opportunities or who are heavily risk-prone.[c] The Bank has recently intensified two major shifts as regards poverty reduction in its global strategy, focusing on formulating poverty-oriented strategies and assessing the impact of Bank projects on the poor. The Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network was formed in 1997 to ensure that the Bank makes the greatest contribution to poverty reduction. Following the *World Development Report* of 1980 and 1990, which were devoted to poverty, the Bank has launched a participatory and collaborative process for the preparation of the *World Development Report 2000/2001*, which will be focused on poverty and will be issued in the autumn of 2000. A special Web site (PovertyNet) is dedicated to that task.

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The original mandate of IFAD is based on the tripartite strategy of increasing food production, reducing undernutrition and alleviating rural poverty. More recently, the organization confirmed its commitment to help eradicate rural poverty and hunger, focusing on the promotion of the productive capacity of the rural poor, with special focus on people's participation, grass-roots organizations, environment, gender and ethnic minorities.

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). It contributes to poverty eradication within its mandate of promoting sustainable industrial development in developing countries and countries in transition. Targeted actions address areas such as micro, small and medium enterprises, agro-based and agro-related industries, integration of women in industrial development and rural industrial development. Industrial development is also seen in the context of sustainable development, productive employment creation and economic growth, which are the basis for an enabling environment to combat poverty.

Others

Poverty eradication is a guiding theme for a number of organizations' technical cooperation programmes, influencing the design of their operations, in the attempt of making them sensitive to the poorer sectors of the society. This is case for the *International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)* (especially in the agricultural sector, at the small-farmer level). In some organizations, poverty cannot be addressed directly for the technical nature of their mandates. Poverty becomes relevant, in those cases, through the relative allocation of resources to poorer countries (e.g., the *International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)*), or for the indirect benefit that some infrastructures bring to the economic growth of the poor countries (the *Universal Postal Union (UPU)*, the *International Telecommunication Union (ITU)*). The development of specific services may produce job-creation effects that benefit the poor *(UPU)*. *UNU* contributes to poverty eradication through a number of selected activities focused on African development, food and nutrition, and environment.

[a] See UNDP Executive Board decision DP/1995/23, para. 4; see also UNDP, *Overcoming Human Poverty* (New York, 1998).

[b] See World Bank, *Poverty Reduction and the World Bank: Progress in Fiscal 1996 and 1997* (Washington, D.C.).

[c] See ibid., 1998 edition.

24. The United Nations system has always considered that a key element of a pro-poor strategy is a widespread awareness of the relevance and dimension of the poverty problem. This is why it is very active, often through joint initiatives, in promoting *advocacy and information* activities on poverty. In collaboration with national authorities and other development partners, United Nations system organizations, including the World Bank, promote conferences, workshops, public forums, networks and information campaigns, such as the Poverty Eradication Day or Week.[18] These initiatives also include the preparation of discussion papers and publications, and support to the Government in establishing relations with other development partners (civil society, local communities, private sector and other donors).

25. Many countries have sought *assistance in formulating national poverty eradication policies*. The 1998 resident coordinator annual reports bring abundant evidence of the support provided to Governments in the formulation of national policies.[19] Sometimes these policies are part of more general social development policy frameworks, as in the case of Bangladesh's national action plan, Cambodia's socio-economic development plan,

[18] A few examples are the poverty eradication month initiative in Mozambique; the workshop on the theme "Right, poverty and social policy" and the workshop on the theme "Triangle of solidarity" in Costa Rica; the public forum on eradication of poverty and the "Poverty run" in Ethiopia; the poverty reduction forum in Zimbabwe; the United Nations regional forum on poverty eradication in southern Africa, organized in Namibia. Many other cases are reported, for example, by the resident coordinators in Botswana, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau, Jamaica and Morocco.

[19] Explicit initiatives of this type have been confirmed at least in these countries: Algeria, Barbados, Bolivia, Burundi, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Chile, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Gambia, Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mongolia, Niger, Peru, Philippines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, United Republic of Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

Ethiopia's social plan of action, Côte d'Ivoire's human development strategy, Morocco's social development strategy, Paraguay's social development strategic plan, the Philippines' social reform agenda, and Swaziland's national development strategy and economic and social reform agenda. They may also be spelled out in strategic or long-term vision statements, such as Vision 2022 in Swaziland, Vision 2010 in Nigeria, and Vision 2020 in Mozambique.

26. The Poverty Strategies Initiative, launched by UNDP in 1996 as a multidonor programme, aimed at supporting national Governments in formulating strategies and plans to fight poverty.[20] This type of upstream support includes also the formulation of specific strategies for social development, which have a direct bearing on poverty eradication, such as employment, informal sector, basic social services (e.g., education, health, water and sanitation), food security, rural and community-based development.

27. The creation of a favourable policy environment for poverty eradication at the national level is deemed essential to effective operational activities. The system is working with national authorities to achieve balanced macroeconomic policies, which include appropriate allocation of resources to support a poverty-oriented strategy. One guiding element in this regard is the *20/20 Initiative* (see box 2).

28. That Initiative, in which the United Nations system organizations, including the World Bank, have been particularly active, involves a number of interested countries and is intended to reach the universal access to basic social services by establishing clear-cut targets in the resource allocation of both national fiscal expenditures and development cooperation budgets.

29. The United Nations system, including the World Bank, consistently encourages Governments (and other donors) to maintain or increase resource allocations to basic social services (including reproductive health services, basic education, nutrition programmes and low-cost water and sanitation) and use those resources more effectively and equitably. By 1998, expenditure reviews of the social sector had been promoted by UNICEF and UNDP in about 30 countries, facilitating the organization of seven regional workshops in East and South-East Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

30. *Support to national poverty analysis* continues to be a top priority, as demonstrated by the sharp increase in the number of country-specific poverty studies promoted by the United Nations system, including the World Bank, since the late 1980s.

31. National human development reports were prepared in more than 100 countries by national authorities themselves, with the support of UNDP and the collaboration of other organizations of the system. The World Bank, for its part, working in close consultation with national Governments and often in collaboration with the United Nations system and bilateral donors, has conducted approximately 100 poverty assessments in 86 countries.

32. The *enhancement of domestic institutional capacity* to assess poverty conditions, which was recommended by the Council in 1996, was a positive result of most of these initiatives. To date, 75 out of 130 countries, have officially endorsed definitions of "extreme poverty", and 69 have endorsed definitions of "overall poverty".[20] Information systems and basic data banks on poverty and related issues have been created in many countries.[21] Examples are

[20] See UNDP, *Overcoming Human Poverty* (New York, 1998). In a survey conducted by UNDP over 130 countries, 78 of them (i.e., 60 per cent) have either a specific plan or strategy for poverty reduction (43) or included a specific component of their development plans or strategies explicitly devoted to poverty reduction (35).

[21] For example, in Brazil, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, El Salvador, Gabon, Gambia, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

reported by resident coordinators on research activities and studies focused on related themes such as food security (e.g., Bangladesh, Chad, Eritrea, Sudan and Togo), health, including maternal health (e.g., Nepal), and basic education and employment (e.g., Nepal, Nigeria and Peru).

Box No. 2
The 20/20 Initiative

The 20/20 Initiative[a] consists on an attempt to reach a commitment between interested developed and developing country partners to allocate, on average, 20 per cent of the fiscal budget in developing countries, and 20 per cent of the foreign aid budget in the donor countries to the promotion of basic social services.

The Initiative was originally proposed by a few United Nations system organizations, and was endorsed by the World Summit for Social Development in 1995,[b] responding to the ambitious and time-bound goals for social development and poverty eradication set by a series of global conferences. It provides a framework for translating the needs for increased investment in basic social services — basic health, including reproductive health services, basic education, nutrition programmes and low-cost water and sanitation, in order to reach goals such as those summarized by the Development Assistance Committee for the year 2015 in the report *Shaping the Twenty-first Century*. The 20/20 Initiative highlights the fact that current allocations of resources fall short by about one third of the financial requirements to achieve universal coverage of basic social services.

As a result of a meeting promoted by the Governments of the Netherlands and Norway at Oslo in April 1996, with a number of interested countries, multilateral organizations and NGOs, a review of the implementation of the 20/20 Initiative led to the adoption of the Oslo consensus, which included an agreement on the elements of basic social services, requiring better monitoring of expenditures on these services in order to conduct meaningful policy dialogues with interested governments before establishing 20/20 compacts.

The policy dialogue required to implement the 20/20 Initiative demands a full commitment of the Government, full participation of the general public in the developing countries and the support from the international community.

The Initiative requires better data on resource allocation to basic social services. Therefore, several organizations of the United Nations system, in particular UNDP and UNICEF, in close collaboration with the World Bank, often in association with UNFPA and WHO, have undertaken preliminary country studies, in close collaboration and consultation with national Governments, in order to conduct public expenditure reviews and monitor budget allocations to basic social services. Country studies confirm that most developing and donor countries fall short of the 20 per cent benchmark and that the utilization of resources among countries and within each country is uneven.

The Hanoi consensus, adopted in October 1998, reiterated the objectives of the 20/20 Initiative and stressed that the goal of universal access to basic social services is based on ethical, legal and economic grounds. Ensuring access to basic social services for the unreached, the vulnerable and the most disadvantaged members of human society is not only morally imperative but also economically rational, eradicating the worst manifestations of poverty and laying the foundations for sustainable economic growth and productivity gains in the future. As the Hanoi consensus underlined, developing countries are the main actors in expanding the coverage and improve the quality of basic social services, although donors have a great responsibility in ensuring that more resources are allocated to basic social services in their official development assistance (ODA) programmes.

Concern was also expressed for the possible consequences of the current economic and financial crisis in Asia, while recognizing that the main obstacles are found in the lack of political priority and limited absorptive capacity, which result in inadequate level and use of resources allocated to basic social services. The Hanoi consensus recognizes that the objective of achieving universal access to basic social services should be presented and promoted at the special session of the General Assembly expected to review the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action.

[a] See *Implementing the 20/20 Initiative: Achieving universal Access to Basic Social Services* (UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank, New York, 1998). See also draft report of the second international meeting on the 20/20 Initiative (Hanoi, 27–29 October 1998).

[b] See *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, chap. V, para. 88.

33. Despite these initiatives, analytical capacity remains inadequate in some countries. Moreover, monitoring and evaluation functions are often neglected.[22] Therefore, increasing attention is devoted to strengthening national capacity in these areas by United Nations system, including the World Bank,[23] frequently through joint activities. It is also anticipated that the wider application of common country assessments, in collaboration with the Government and other national and international partners, will further contribute to this goal.

34. Poverty-focused initiatives, such as those examined in the present section, have frequently been associated with *institution-building* components, so that managerial, organizational and technical capacities of national institutions devoted to poverty reduction or active in producing basic social services are developed. This institution-building effect is normally associated with other aspects of the individual projects.[24] The focus is on the

[22] See UNDP, *Overcoming Human Poverty* (New York, 1998).

[23] See World Bank, *Poverty Reduction and the World Bank: Progress in Fiscal 1996 and 1997* (Washington, D.C.).

[24] Specialized Government structures are being developed to carry out poverty eradication policies. This is the case of the Commissariat on poverty and human rights attached to the Presidency in Mauritania; the Leading Group for Poverty Reduction of the State Council in China; the special responsibility of the Cabinet, in the case of Mali, for the formulation of a national strategy against poverty; the Office of the

enhancement of capacities in local institutions, or sometimes, the creation of new institutions. However, as emphasized in the evaluation conducted in the 1998 triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development, *capacity-building* should not be limited to institution-building dimensions but should encompass the broader concept of capacity development, to be identified as a specific objective.

35. The capacities of the poor are enhanced also through the great variety of *direct support initiatives* undertaken by the United Nations system organizations. They either focus on pursuing income-generation for the poor through better access to or better use of productive resources (land, labour, physical capital and infrastructures, finance, technology, environmental resources), or aim at increasing access to *basic social services* also through safety net programmes. They include employment generation programmes, establishment of micro-enterprises, village-based development initiatives[25] and the promotion of basic social services through public expenditure programmes (including public works).

Box 3
Basic social services for all

The Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development adopted in March 1995 includes quantitative targets for meeting basic needs, specifically on basic education, illiteracy, life expectancy, infant and maternal mortality, health and health care, food security and malnutrition, safe drinking water and proper sanitation, and affordable and adequate shelter, calling for efforts to reach universal coverage for all by, and access by all to, basic social services. These may be grouped under three main categories:

(a) services that meet the essential needs of the entire population;

(b) services that respond to needs at different stages of an individual lifespan;

(c) services that are tailored to the requirements of groups with specific needs, including persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees, indigenous people, groups experiencing discrimination, victims of crime or violence, and others.

The ACC Task Force on Basic Social Services for All produced guidelines on basic education, a common approach to national capacity-building in tracking child and maternal mortality, primary health care, reproductive health and women's empowerment and a guidance note on international migration and development.

Prime Minister in Jamaica for the national poverty eradication programme; and the Poverty Alleviation and Job Creation Unit in Botswana.

[25] Some of these interventions more directly pursue enhancing organizational and business capacities through training in order to establish new micro-enterprises (e.g., in Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Romania) or promote community development by enhancing capacity to manage village-level infrastructure projects.

The United Nations Secretariat recently drew the attention of the Commission for Social Development on two interrelated areas: (a) innovation in the delivery and financing of social services, and (b) ensuring access to social services of under-served population, taking into account the variety of country situations as regards the availability and coverage of these services.[a]

The Commission for Social Development, at its thirty-seventh session of February 1999, reached agreed conclusions, which identify general principles and goals for the Governments involved on the following issues:

(a) The delivery and provision of social services to promote social development (State's responsibility, links with the human rights, need to introduce an innovative approach in delivery systems in order to ensure universal coverage);

(b) The need to strengthen partnership between the State and civil society, while recognizing the primary responsibility of Governments for providing and ensuring the universal availability of basic services;

(c) Need to improve information about available social services;

(d) Need to synchronize economic and social policy with the provision of better social services;

(e) Need for new approaches in mobilizing resources for social services, if budgetary constraints prevail, requiring resources also from private sector and not-for-profit and voluntary sector;

(f) In all cases, a strong commitment of the international community is needed to support national efforts.

The Commission highlighted the importance of agreeing on a mutual commitment between interested developed and developing country partners to implement the goals of the 20/20 Initiative. It stressed that the international community should assist developing countries to ensure the provision of basic social services during periods of economic difficulty, including those adversely affected by globalization processes, recommending more socially sensitive approaches to structural adjustment. The international community was also invited to continue to assist countries with economies in transition in their efforts to provide social services for all.[b]

---

[a] See E/CN.5/1999/2.

[b] See agreed conclusions of the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-seventh session entitled "Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development: social services for all".

36. By stressing basic education as a means to empower the poor and improve their quality of life, the system has expanded people's opportunities.[26] The close link between ill health and poverty motivates several interventions of the United Nations system, aimed at improving the access to clean drinking water, sanitation and basic health facilities.[27]

37. The vulnerability of certain groups to structural adjustment measures, reductions and restructuring of public employment or public expenditure, liberalization or gradual adjustment of prices and exchange rates, and other similar economic reforms has justified the focus of several initiatives on the support to social protection measures. The World Bank, in collaboration with UNDP and other organizations, has often provided temporary relief to population affected by structural adjustment processes, establishing *social funds* or other programmes defined as *safety nets*. Social funds have been used to finance a wide variety of activities, from job creation to infrastructure, small and medium-sized enterprises, and provision of social services. Born as temporary safety nets, these funds have rapidly turned into more permanent instruments for economic and social development. While their value as temporary relief seems to be confirmed in many cases, their effectiveness as vehicles to produce poverty reduction, i.e. their capacity to reach the poorest population, is uneven.[28]

Variety of approaches

38. In its 1996 agreed conclusions, the Council highlighted that there is no single best strategy for poverty eradication and that poverty eradication strategies should be country specific.[29] Country evidence shows a remarkable ability of the United Nations system to adjust its support to different conditions, confirming that a key feature of the system is its adaptability.

39. The United Nations system has been able to evolve its response to poverty alleviation in different countries, adjusting to the variety of conditions of the poor population,[30] using a country-driven approach. A different mix of poverty-focused measures are launched in developing countries in recession, countries with short-term accelerated growth but long-term structural constraints, countries which are affected by the short-term impact of

---

[26] UNESCO's interventions in this area are developed on the basis of a framework of action on the role of education in poverty alleviation, and has generated innovative modes of educational delivery, as in the case of the guidance, counselling and youth development programme in Africa, which addresses the poor communities and has been implemented in more than 22 countries.

[27] Examples are: (a) assistance by WHO and UNICEF to the formulation of plans for district-level health delivery systems, or adoption of essential clinical and public health strategies for the poorest; (b) UNFPA's assistance in developing reproductive health services and planning the implementation of national health strategies; (c) the initiatives promoted under the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) umbrella (in the framework of the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) programme, which has established a network of inter-agency thematic groups and coordinating initiatives in a large number of countries).

[28] Social funds have been effective in several countries to make a case for social equity in national development and introduced successful innovations in emergency and development work, showing the ability of reaching the poor, delivering jobs, services and infrastructure (see *Social Funds and Reaching the Poor: Experiences and Future Direction* (World Bank, 1998). However, their budgets are small percentages of overall public spending. Their impact on the permanent level of income of the beneficiaries is difficult to assess, and at times they do not reach the poorest of the poor. In countries where decentralization of government has made substantial progress, the centralized management of resources to be invested locally may be in open contrast with the autonomy of municipalities and rural districts (see ibid.).

[29] See agreed conclusions 1996/1 of the Council, para. 6.

[30] See the results of the UNDP study conducted in 1996–1997 by the Knowledge Network for Poverty Reduction, reported in UNDP, *Overcoming Human Poverty* (New York, 1998).

structural adjustment and economic reforms, countries dominated by a strong polarization of productive sectors and accentuated social dualism, countries in transition, countries that are facing the social consequences of recent financial crisis, countries in or emerging from war and social turmoil, and countries hit by natural calamities. Poverty occurs in all these cases, but in different forms. The capacity of the United Nations system to face sudden changes in prevailing country conditions when it deals with poverty reduction requires decentralization and flexibility.

40. The United Nations system has supported national efforts to eradicate poverty in *Latin America* focusing on inequality of social conditions and income distribution, emphasizing employment creation for the low skilled, and targeting programmes of interventions towards the poorer segments of the population, particularly the absolute poor in rural regions and indigenous population.

41. In *countries in transition*,[31] which started from situations in which the initial income distribution was relatively even and falling incomes were associated with difficult conditions through which economic transition took place, have often been accompanied by rising inequality. There is a poverty induced by some of the effects of the transition process.[32] The role of the United Nations system has focused on the difficult balance between economic reforms and the need for a "credible State", where the latter, while performing important functions in support of market development, should also face the challenge of ensuring the protection of human development through a new welfare system, with selective actions in health and education.

42. The ongoing *globalization* of the world economy has produced social effects which are not uniform and may pose the risk of leaving large segments of the world's population in poverty. In October 1998,[33] ACC underscored its commitment to common action to tackle development challenges arising from globalization and the adverse effects of the financial crisis, addressing the structural and institutional reforms, strengthening or building basic social services, livelihood opportunities and safety nets for the least fortunate. ACC also emphasized that equity and social justice, beyond their inherent value, are also necessary for political and financial stability. ACC expressed also its concern for the further marginalization of the poorest countries. Many developing countries have difficulty in integrating into a worldwide system of economic interdependence, due, *inter alia*, to their structural weaknesses and the burden of external indebtedness, accumulated during the course of the past decades.[34]

43. This problem is very acute for many *sub-Saharan African countries*. Globalization, however, has produced new victims in countries, which in the past had been singled out for their rapid economic growth and have been recently penalized by sudden capital outflows, when facing financial instability. This applies in particular to the *East and South East Asian countries*, where the achievements of social progress of the last decades are now in jeopardy. The intensity of the current economic crisis has produced unfortunate consequences by

[31] See UNDP, *Poverty in Transition?* (New York, 1998).

[32] It is estimated that the number of poor in the former USSR and Eastern Europe has increased in the 1990s by over 150 million as a consequence of worsening income distribution, declining output, the privatization process, wage and price liberalization, inflation and the collapse of the transfer system of the former administrative-command systems.

[33] See press release on the ACC meeting of 31 October 1998, entitled "United Nations Leaders join forces to meet challenges of globalization" issued on 2 November 1998.

[34] External debt of low-income countries rose from $55 billion to $215 billion between 1980 and 1995, representing more than twice the level of their export earnings. The amount of resources that external debt absorbs subtract precious resources from poverty eradication.

creating new poverty, causing an explosion of unemployment rates, draconian reductions of public spending, sharp increases of prices of primary necessities, fall of real wages, affecting also millions of migrant workers coming from other countries of the region. Signs of rising malnutrition are seen in some cases. Basic social services have seriously deteriorated and school drop-outs have suddenly increased. The social fabric of all these countries has faced severe threats for erosion. The lack or inadequacy of social safety nets generated a new category of poor, while the conditions of the older poor had worsened, as a consequence of higher food prices and reduced social spending.

44. How to address the social consequences of the Asian financial crisis is being considered in many international forums, including the Council. It is important to reflect their implications for sustainable poverty eradication strategies and the role that the United Nations system can play therein. Greater cooperation with the World Bank has been seen.[35]

45. In countries where economic recession has been persistent, as in large parts of *sub-Saharan Africa*,[36] income stagnation has been accompanied by a significant increase in poverty. In many of those countries, the economy is polarized and poverty eradication requires strong and well-targeted national agendas, with national programmes which may ensure coordination. Reorientation of fiscal resource allocations, such as those suggested by the 20/20 Initiative, may produce useful results, giving the highest priority to the development of basic social services, although budget constraints are major obstacles. Empowerment, social mobility, capacity-building, microfinancing and employment creation appear to be effective ways to facilitate poverty reduction.

46. The system was able to adjust its poverty eradication approach to special circumstances when *emergency situations* prevail. Emergencies may be linked to natural calamities (such as floods, hurricanes, drought) or man-made disasters, as in the cases of wars and civil strife. In these cases, unforeseen needs hinder the pursuit of a poverty eradication strategy.

47. Where *natural disasters* occur — as in the 1998 floods in Bangladesh, which affected 30 million people and covered 70 per cent of the country for two months, or the hurricanes Georges and Mitch, which affected many countries in Central America and the Caribbean — the first operation undertaken by the system is a damage assessment, often entrusted to the resident coordinator system, which includes the estimation of crop losses, and most importantly the assessment of needs of the affected population (food, health, shelter, clothing, water and sanitation, medical facilities, child protection and family reunification, education).

48. Where *civil unrest or war conditions* prevail, all economic activities become precarious, the budget for social services is substantially cut, and an extremely high proportion of the population remains below the poverty line, deprived of their homes and their traditional sources of subsistence. All social indicators deteriorate. Risks of infection for epidemic disease substantially rise, and so does the education deficit. The explosion of

---

[35] See, for example, the framework drafted by the United Nations system in Thailand in May 1998, entitled "A people-centred development strategy for rapid recovery in Thailand". In those countries, the issue of the newly poor has led to immediate action by the United Nations system, including the World Bank, through advocacy initiatives, impact studies, public debates and joint operational action, especially through well-targeted national programmes of safety nets, job retraining, alternative employment initiatives (e.g., in environmental projects) and new strategies to support smaller enterprises.

[36] See UNDP, *Progress Against Poverty in Africa* (New York, 1998), for a series of examples of poverty eradication interventions in different countries of Africa, see *Poverty Eradication in Africa: Selected Country Experiences*, produced by the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

massive flows of displaced people and refugees raise new and difficult challenges to poverty eradication.

49. In all these cases, a strategy for poverty eradication requires that the United Nations system focus on three major challenges: *resettlement* of refugees, *rehabilitation* of the economy and the society as a whole and its most affected members, and *reintegration* of formerly displaced and other affected population into the productive functioning of the country.

50. In these cases, the role of the United Nations system usually is to provide humanitarian assistance, focusing on coordination, while planning for medium-term rehabilitation and recovery, looking for new opportunities to resettle the returned refugees and promote community development. Quick impact projects are often introduced. Participatory initiatives of community-based development may be an instrument for peace-building at the local level. Interaction with the Government, including local authorities, is crucial, and requires the involvement of the civil society, especially at local community level.

Community-based approach

51. There is a widespread concern within the United Nations system, including the World Bank, that poverty eradication initiatives may not always reach the poorest. In response to this concern, there is a trend towards more participatory and community-based approaches.[37]

52. Most initiatives pursue *social mobilization* of the target population, such as by promoting community organizations and community development.[38] Social mobilization requires an expanded access to resources, such as through micro-financing and overcoming the lack of access of the poor to commercial lending.[39] Some initiatives deal with problems of social exclusion and other obstacles which may reduce the participation of the target population. Innovative initiatives, such as network programmes,[40] have targeted most vulnerable groups, encouraging a bottom-up approach and direct involvement of interested population.[41]

53. United Nations system organizations, including the World Bank, increasingly make use of an *empowerment approach* in their poverty-focused operations. This approach emphasizes the principle of self-determination and self-respect as the foundation for human development and stresses both the need to promote awareness-raising among the marginalized groups, and the need to build social and political capital through collective organization and mobilization. Education for all has often been highlighted as an important source of empowerment.

---

[37] See, for example, United Nations, "Participatory approaches to poverty alleviation in rural community development" (ST/ESA/262); see also useful examples in United Nations, "Poverty eradication in Africa: selected country experiences"

[38] See UNDP, *Overcoming Human Poverty* (New York, 1998), chap. 3. This dimension is dominant in the approach being adopted by the World Bank in the *World Development Report 2000/2001* under preparation (see the World Bank's PovertyNet Web site for more details).

[39] The MicroStart pilot programme launched by UNDP in February 1997 at the Microcredit Summit has reached, by the end of 1998, 20 countries. Positive experience is reported by resident coordinators in Benin, Ecuador, Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe.

[40] See initiatives which establish a new alliance between Government and civil society ("network") to reach the most vulnerable in UNDP, *Overcoming Human Poverty*, op. cit. p. 33.

[41] The concept of social mobilization was used in significant initiatives of UNDP, such as the area development schemes launched in Sudan and the South Asian Poverty Alleviation Programme, promoted in 1996 in six countries (Bangladesh, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka).

54. A review of the World Bank's investment operations shows a steady progress in the use of participatory approaches. The introduction of more participatory approaches also shows the need to expand the variety of interlocutors of poverty-focused initiatives, which increasingly involve non-traditional partners, such as civil society organizations, NGOs, the private sector, community-based organizations and, most of all the targeted population itself, the poor, which participates both in the design and implementation of those initiatives. There is an increasing awareness, at the country level, that poverty alleviation requires the full participation of all components of the national society, suggesting the need to establish some kind of "compact" between civil society, government and the private sector in their fight against poverty.

Gender

55. The significant role of gender inequalities must be acknowledged in order to fully understand poverty.[42] In 1998, the Council adopted a resolution on mainstreaming the gender perspective into the policies and programmes of the United Nations system, and decided to pay particular attention to the feminization of poverty, its causes and remedies.[43] The relationship between employment, poverty eradication and empowerment and advancement of women will be addressed by the Council at its high-level segment.[44]

56. United Nations system organizations, in particular the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), have supported Governments in promoting policies and projects aiming at gender equality and the empowerment of women. Initial interventions focused on income-generation through micro-credit schemes, based on an income-poverty approach of gender inequality, which will increasingly need to address often neglected underlying factors which hinder their access to those assets and resources.

57. Recent trends show that the system's activities are more sensitive to promoting women's human rights, capacities and opportunities, establishing better relations with macro-, meso- and micro-phenomena which affect gender balance. Individual capabilities may be conditioned by factors, such as health and education, and sociological, cultural and political constraints, which determine the differentiation of the "entitlements" by gender, thereby affecting women's access to assets and resources. The new approach includes gender-sensitive analysis in all poverty-focused interventions. The United Nations system assists Governments in formulating gender-sensitive policies, encouraging the establishment of specific structures.[45]

D. Coordination

58. Poverty eradication represents an important programming component, and in many cases a key priority for a number of organizations of the United Nations system, including

---

[42] Conceptual linkages between gender and poverty were already addressed since 1993 by the Commission on the Status of Women (see E/CN.6/1993/3).

[43] See Council resolution 1998/43, para. 7; gender mainstreaming represented one of the key conclusions of the Beijing Platform for Action adopted in 1995.

[44] See report of the Secretary-General on this topic for the high-level segment of the Council (E/1999/__).

[45] See UNDP, *Overcoming Human Poverty* (New York, 1998), chap. 7.

the World Bank.[46] There is a general awareness within the system that since poverty eradication is neither the province of any one agency nor can it be addressed by individual actions of organizations only, it requires a system-wide, well-coordinated approach.

59. At the inter-agency level, while aiming at broadening system-wide collaboration, the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) has promoted a number of initiatives on poverty eradication, trying to establish a link between the intergovernmental decisions emanating from the international global conferences and the need to ensure an integrated and coordinated follow-up also at the country level.[47]

60. These initiatives include also the establishment of a working group on poverty (1993), a Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) brainstorming workshop (Turin, September 1995), the establishment of three inter-agency task forces in 1995, with a strong country-focused mandate, the adoption of the *Statement of Commitment for Action to Eradicate Poverty*[48] and the draft framework prepared by CCPOQ, entitled "Freedom from poverty: actions and partnerships", which followed the discussion in 1998 of a note entitled "Combating poverty towards a common response".

61. The inter-agency task forces had a major role, identifying, as final outputs, common principles and practical guidelines to facilitate programming at the country level. The Task Force on Basic Social Services for All, in particular, has produced guidelines for the resident coordinator system and a compendium[49] of international commitments on poverty and social integration, and other information tools.

62. A framework entitled "Freedom from poverty: actions and partnerships" was drafted in September 1998, building on the work of ACC task forces for the integrated follow-up to global conferences. The draft framework, currently under revision, contains a matrix, which identifies 10 groups of policy measures required to promote poverty eradication, the corresponding elements (activities, criteria, modalities and other aspects) for a system-wide approach against poverty, and potential areas for collaboration.

63. Given the variety of poverty-focused activities of the United Nations system and the variety of mandates of the organizations in the area of poverty eradication, the Council already focused, in 1996,[50] on the need to enhance harmonization and coordination among all those who intervene to eradicate poverty, requiring effective collaboration by all relevant partners, both within the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, and with other external partners and, most importantly, with national partners.

64. In the agreed conclusions adopted in 1996, the Council requested the United Nations system organizations to pursue actively a coordinated and integrated approach to the implementation of the outcome of the global conferences, which have all given priority to the goal of poverty eradication. The Council urged all organizations of the United Nations

---

[46] See Box 1 for a brief indication of the role of poverty eradication as an agency objective for a selection of United Nations system organizations, including the World Bank.

[47] For a review of these initiatives, see also E/1998/19.

[48] The statement, adopted by ACC in May 1998, was submitted to the Council at its substantive session of 1998 (see E/1998/73), see sect. II A above for a synthesis of the statement.

[49] See compendium of major issues addressed by the United Nations global conferences in the 1990s, in "End-products of the ACC Task Force on Basic Social Services for All" (October 1997). The compendium contains the official documents and indicators addressing the following areas: (1) primary health care, (2) basic education, (3) reproductive health, (4) women's empowerment, (5) international migration and (6) national capacity-building in tracking child and maternal mortality.

[50] See agreed conclusions 1996/1 of the Council, para. 5.

system to ensure that their country-level representatives are fully committed to poverty eradication activities, promoting joint action by the United Nations system.

65. The Council, in particular, urged the organizations of the United Nations system to assist the Governments, upon request, through collective efforts made within the resident coordinator system, in preparing an assessment of the poverty situation in the countries as the basis for country-specific poverty eradication strategies. The Council reiterated that poverty eradication activities are a high priority of the United Nations system and, as mentioned earlier (see sect. II.A above), should be supported and coordinated through the resident coordinator system, taking into account the complementarities and strengths of each organization and recognizing that the ultimate responsibility of coordination in the country is that of the Government. In accordance with national plans and priorities, United Nations system organizations should actively work towards expanding and improving coordination and promote joint activities related, as appropriate, to the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of poverty eradication activities.[51]

66. The resident coordinator system operates on the basis of a number of strengthened mechanisms which were reviewed by the 1998 triennial comprehensive policy review and on which the present report provides further information in subsequent chapters. These mechanisms support coordination of poverty eradication activities. Among them, the most relevant are thematic groups and strategic and programming frameworks (such as the country strategy note, common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)). In addition, round tables and consultative group meetings, in particular those which focused on poverty reduction, should be mentioned as they help mobilize and coordinate support from the donor community to poverty eradication strategies. The experience of specific round tables on poverty eradication acquired in Mali, Niger and Zimbabwe is a useful example.

67. *Thematic groups* have become frequent mechanisms of consultation within the United Nations system and policy dialogue with national counterparts on poverty eradication. These groups focus on poverty eradication as a central theme or other related cross-cutting issues (e.g., community development, education, health, HIV/AIDS, rural development, foods security, gender and development) in some countries.[52] At times, poverty eradication groups have only recently been established, so it is premature to assess their effectiveness. These groups may become important instruments for feedback, monitoring, reviewing, evaluating and reorienting pro-poor actions. In some cases, such as Costa Rica, Malawi and Mali, thematic groups are used for practical consultation in collaborative programming exercises (joint or parallel programming), which are relevant for poverty-focused initiatives, especially if referred to specific geographical areas.

68. The United Nations system's response to national priorities needs to take into account global conferences. This was done in many country strategy notes, especially those formulated since 1994, and is more explicit both in the common country assessments and UNDAF. This is why these two mechanisms are expected to play an increasing role in coordinating the activities of the United Nations system in support of poverty eradication. This applies particularly to the common country assessments, for their potential as an

[51] See agreed conclusions 1996/1 of the Council, para. 17.

[52] Examples can be found in Barbados, Benin, Cambodia, China, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Malawi, Morocco and Zimbabwe. According to the 1998 annual report of the resident coordinators, more than 50 countries have established thematic groups focused on poverty eradication.

analytic and advocacy tool in support of a coordinated poverty-oriented programme. This corresponds to the indications made by the Council in 1996.[53]

69. The way in which the *country strategy notes* have reflected poverty eradication as a priority area varies from one country to another. To date, 33 country strategy notes have been adopted; poverty eradication is explicitly indicated as a priority area of intervention for the United Nations system in at least 14 of them.[54] In another 10 countries, poverty is subsumed by some other concept, such as social development, income distribution or equity, sustainable human development or priority of basic social services.[55] In some cases, the reference to poverty eradication includes the explicit mention of specific targets, although in most cases it is indicated only as an overall objective.[56]

70. The *common country assessment* is an important potential tool in supporting a coordinated poverty-focused strategy. It complements efforts already undertaken at the country level by various organizations to assess the poverty situation through national human development reports (UNDP), poverty assessments (World Bank), situation analyses of UNICEF, food security assessment (WFP), population analyses (UNFPA) and other relevant analytical studies, with the advantage of attempting an integrated and harmonized approach within the system.[57]

71. As regards *UNDAF*, so far experimented in 18 countries, the planned assessment of its effectiveness, expected by the year 2001, will allow the evaluation of its capacity to affect the performance of the United Nations system, also as a tool to harmonize and integrate efforts and promote poverty eradication in the framework of people-centred development.[58] In all countries in which a UNDAF was completed, poverty eradication figures as a central priority of the United Nations system.

E. Evaluation

72. Individual organizations have conducted evaluation of projects or cluster of poverty-focused projects in order to assess their effectiveness. Country poverty assessments, national human development reports and other country-level poverty analyses that UNDP, the World Bank and other organizations have conducted in several countries focus their analysis on the conditions of the poor, defining or assessing a poverty-reduction strategy. In so doing, they also include an assessment of the most suitable policy measures required to implement those strategies.

73. Studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of specific instruments and measures in terms of poverty reduction. UNICEF has completed studies on issues, such as the effectiveness of social funds in developing countries, mechanisms to involve users in financing basic social services, options for financing primary education in Africa. The World

[53] See agreed conclusions 1996/1 of the Council, para. 9.

[54] Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mali, Mexico, Morocco, Republic of Moldova, Sudan, Turkey, Zambia.

[55] Eritrea, Guatemala, Mozambique, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Senegal, Thailand, Ukraine, Viet Nam.

[56] The inadequate specification of targets in most country strategy notes and the omission of specific indicators in most cases suggests that existing country strategy notes may benefit from the current impulse to formulate common country assessments in the course of future revisions.

[57] According to the 1998 resident coordinator annual reports, 58 countries are planning to initiate or have already undertaken common country assessments leading to the formulation of UNDAFs.

[58] See Addendum 1 of the report for more details on the common country assessment and UNDAF.

Bank has conducted an extensive series of studies on the effectiveness of the various forms of safety nets and related instruments, at the global, regional and country level.[59]

74. UNDP, in 1994, requested an external evaluation of the UNDP's poverty reduction activities in order to find lessons useful to define the strategy of the organization.[60] Most importantly, the evaluation concluded that UNDP had no systematic way to evaluate the costs or the impact of those activities in terms of people's well-being. That evaluation also emphasized that it was difficult to move from the evaluation of a set of local-level initiatives to a more integrated programme approach for UNDP activities.

75. More comprehensive assessments of the poverty reduction activity were promoted by UNDP and the World Bank. The UNDP report *Overcoming Human Poverty* represents a major endeavour to produce a comprehensive review of the poverty eradication efforts conducted by UNDP, and covers a wide range of themes. In addition, an internal in-depth study of the poverty-focused projects for 1992–1996 has recently been attempted by UNDP, focusing on the distribution of resources over the fifth programming cycle of UNDP, and appraising the extent to which that distribution matched the new legislative mandates that UNDP had established for itself in 1994.[61] Combined with the *Human Development Report*, the various regional human development reports,[62] the national long-term prospective strategies and several national human development reports, these activities represent an intensive effort to progress on assessing UNDP operations in terms of poverty eradication.

76. The World Bank has conducted an assessment of its own activities focused on poverty reduction in a systematic way, publishing almost annually a report entitled *Poverty Reduction and the World Bank*. The effectiveness of the Bank's operations in terms of poverty reduction is estimated, both in global terms and with reference to specific instruments, comparing results with the poverty assessments conducted by the Bank in many countries. In view of the preparation of the *World Development Report 2000/2001*, the Bank has announced the need to change its way of assessing pro-poor activities, moving from an approach based on counting poverty-focused projects to a new approach based on the actual assessment of their impact on the poor, a more strategic and output-oriented approach.

77. The effectiveness of the initiatives promoted by the United Nations system to support poverty eradication cannot be easily measured. An assessment of poverty-focused activities should go beyond the distribution of financial resources. As shown by one approach chosen by the World Bank for the *World Development Report 2000/2001*, one way of assessing the real impact of the various pro-poor activities could be in terms of household welfare. Even though the country studies undertaken for the national human development reports and similar studies may contain useful information on the effectiveness of the United Nations system in terms of poverty reduction, their focus is normally on the assessment of poverty situations or poverty strategies. In particular, the following relevant questions should find an answer:

- To what extent has the support provided by the United Nations system organizations to the formulation of poverty reduction policies at the country level been effective?
- What are the projects/activities that are more likely to affect positively the living conditions of the poor?

[59] See references in the PovertyNet Web site of the World Bank.

[60] See UNDP, *Overcoming Human Poverty* (New York, 1998).

[61] The final results of that in-depth study are not yet available.

[62] See also the following regional reports published by UNDP: "Preventing and eradicating poverty in the Arab States", "Progress against poverty in Africa" and for the Eastern European countries and Commonwealth of Independent States, "Poverty in Transition?"

- How is a target group defined in the course of designing operational strategies?
- How is the gender dimension addressed in pro-poor initiatives promoted by the United Nations system?
- How effective is the United Nations system in mobilizing financial support (from both domestic and external sources) to poverty-related initiatives?
- Do poverty-related initiatives address the needs of the poorest or do they still marginalize them as the most vulnerable population?

F. Recommendations

78. The Council may wish to recall General Assembly resolution 51/178 on the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, in particular paragraph 8, and to:

(a) Call on the funds and programmes and agencies of the system to continue to provide support to developing countries in their efforts to eradicate poverty, assisting them in coordinating action in this area;

(b) Call on the United Nations development system organizations to support national efforts to formulate, coordinate, implement, monitor and assess integrated poverty strategies, including through capacity-building initiatives and, where requested, supporting reviews of public expenditures in developing countries to increase the allocation and enhance the effective use of resources for poverty eradication purposes;

(c) Undertake activities in support of policy analysis, in accordance with appropriate mandates, including by providing advisory services to Governments on national trends in poverty and conditions of the most vulnerable groups, strengthening the capacity of the Governments to establish effective data banks and to carry out appropriate poverty assessments at the country level;

(d) Request the United Nations system organizations to continue to support, in a coherent and coordinated manner, national efforts to empower people living in poverty, and to suggest appropriate measures to correct inequities in accordance with established norms and mandates of the United Nations system;

(e) Make further progress in harmonizing United Nations system's support to national poverty eradication programmes through such programme frameworks as the country strategy notes, common country assessments and UNDAF, and to make full use of thematic groups and other coordination mechanisms within the resident coordinator system in order to provide a coordinated and collaborative response by the United Nations system to national priorities for poverty eradication;

(f) Call on the system further to increase its collaboration with all development partners in supporting national priorities and policies, reflecting the cross-cutting nature of poverty eradication, including by increased collaboration with multilateral financial institutions, particularly the World Bank as well as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), regional banks, other external donors and civil society organizations, as appropriate.

79. The Council may also wish to encourage the system to take steps to enhance the effectiveness and impact of poverty-oriented support provided by the United Nations system, including by undertaking collaborative evaluations by ensuring that the results of these evaluations are applied through improved programmes. Moreover, the Council may wish to reaffirm the importance of focusing the evaluations of United Nations system

organizations foreseen in paragraph 53 of General Assembly resolution 53/192 on poverty eradication, intensifying collaborative evaluations in this area.

III. Capacity-building

80. The present section builds on the report of the Secretary-General for the triennial comprehensive policy report, and provides initial information on the implementation of paragraph 32 of General Assembly resolution 53/192. It is supplemented by a study on capacity-building issued recently by the United Nations under the title "Building national capacities: some lessons from impact evaluations by the United Nations". Moreover, a panel of capacity-building specialists will speak at the operational activities segment of the substantive session of 1999 of the Council to report on progress to change current programme policies in the United Nations system to reflect the outcome of the impact evaluation of 1998 and other evaluations of capacity-building.

81. The concept of capacity-building within the United Nations system has evolved as a result of several decades of experience. Until the mid-1980s, capacity-building through the operational activities for development of the United Nations system focused primarily on institution building or strengthening of individual organizations, which involved techniques and concepts that involved what can be described as "organizational engineering". This meant that particular attention was paid to strengthening specific technical and administrative capacity of individual organizations through training, fellowships, expert services and equipment. By the end of the 1980s, this approach began to give way, based on learned experiences, to a broader concept of capacity-building which placed it in a broader national context and included increased attention to such areas as policy and programme formulation, budgeting and financial management, development planning, programme implementation, coordination and performance monitoring and evaluation. Programme and project design tended to take more fully account of external factors to reflect the context in which the building of capacity took place. This could include institutional and social patterns of a country, its legal systems, its political dynamics and centres of political power, its governance, the rule of law, its ethics and attention to human rights and other societal rules under which organizations functioned.

82. Greater efforts were also made to include such areas as partnerships, linkages, networks, stakeholder involvement, integrated planning and inter-organizational coordination. Capacity-building thus began to deal with changes on a larger scale, involving complex issues such as urban development, HIV/AIDS, poverty and environmental management. These complicated and often multisectoral issues posed new challenges for a United Nations system whose technical capacity is for the most part organized on a sectoral basis.

83. Capacity-building was also increasingly seen as a dynamic process in which individual and organizational learning and innovation became more widely accepted by the United Nations system. Support for capacity-building by the United Nations system thus needed to be conceived more flexibly, taking account of experimental and risk-embracing ideas, identifying and supplying additional resources, and introducing facilitation and access to outside learning.

84. The specific requirements of effective capacity-building through technical cooperation should be viewed from the perspective of this evolution. Moreover, while capacity-building continues to be seen by some as a means to achieving such development ends as better maternal child health or higher agricultural productivity, capacity-building should be

increasingly an explicit objective of all technical cooperation as provided by General Assembly resolution 53/192. Efforts are now under way within CCPOQ to develop a shared understanding of capacity building with the aim of combining effectively specific technical goals of cooperation with capacity-building objectives.

85. The results of six impact evaluations prepared within the context of the 1998 triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development were reported to the Council in 1998, and some key points were included in the report of the Secretary-General to the Assembly (A/53/226). These evaluations confirmed that policies pursued by the system, such as independence, impartiality and balance in its handling of issues, enable the system to have an impact in capacity-building. Moreover, as a result of continuity of its presence at the country level, the United Nations system has an understanding of evolving local circumstances that permit it to adapt its approaches rapidly to changing requirements. The United Nations system is often acting locally as a convenor of various development partners, in full accord with the host country, to help address capacity-building issues, reflecting, whenever appropriate, follow-up to global conferences.

86. The evaluations of capacity-building also confirmed that the degree of coherence and collaboration within the United Nations system can be a crucial factor for positive impact in capacity-building whenever several organizations are involved on such issues as health or human resource development. Single-sector high quality technical support from smaller technical agencies can also have a very positive impact on the development of a country's technical capacity.

87. Among the concerns identified by the evaluations were the administrative burden imposed on Governments by the large number of projects supported by the United Nations system and the consequent proliferation of effort. Weaknesses of the institutional memory in many country teams and the resulting difficulties in drawing country level lessons were also mentioned. The greater rigour that is being promoted via the UNDAF process, notably the preparations of the common country assessments, should help the system to make improvements here.

88. In general, the evaluations suggested that operational activities are effective in handling cross-cutting issues, such as capacity-building, in which the organizations of the United Nations system work with the Government on a common set of goals, mutual expectations and limits, which gives their technical competence and advocacy roles an opportunity to be most effective.

89. Among the other factors which were identified by the evaluations as having a significant bearing on varying levels of impact of the United Nations system are (a) civil and political stability; (b) appropriate degrees of decentralization or centralization of national capacity; (c) technological specificity in the capacity required and degree of competition affecting the institutions or entities concerned; (d) ability of countries to deal overall with the effects of policy reform; (e) national ownership; and (f) an effective analysis of the requirements to develop fully operational capacity. Of these factors, (a) and (e) were identified as being of particular relevance in this respect.

90. The evaluations also identified proliferation of effort over too many projects; pressure to undertake projects recommended by individual entities with the United Nations system, with the number and diversity of proposals going beyond the country's managerial capacity; and failure to build sustainability into project design and transfer ownership and accountability as causes for lack of impact in some cases.

91. The evaluations showed that there was an evolution from direct support to institutions to capacity-building through policy advocacy. Although the latter is more difficult to

evaluate in terms of specific outcomes, it nevertheless exemplified an important area of assistance by the United Nations system. They also showed that United Nations system support helped to translate internationally agreed concepts into national policy and helped to readjust capacity-building to meet new and changing policy environments. In one case, institutional capacity developed with United Nations system support was eventually bypassed as new approaches to health programmes were being introduced. However, the United Nations system was able to adjust its operational activities to help empower local initiatives to manage community-based health services The evaluation exercise identified concern about the administrative burden placed on Government by the varying rules and procedures and a large number of projects supported by the United Nations system.

92. Thus, the evaluation in Mali showed that capacity was created, including the capacity of Malians to change and rebuild their own institutions, especially in health. But in both the education and health sectors, some institutional capacity was lost partly because donors bypassed. The main result of the capacity-building effort supported by the United Nations system was found to be the increased confidence the nationals had in themselves. The evaluators recommended against the use of parallel administration by Mali's international partners and help in developing ability for capacity retention.

93. The evaluations show that United Nations system activities were able to prepare conditions for larger programmes to be implemented, highlighting the role of the United Nations system in innovation, testing and demonstration, which illustrates the multiplier effect of operational activities. They also show that a major factor for achieving positive and sustainable results in capacity-building is the availability of a critical mass of financial resources. The evaluation noted that national capacity created successfully with United Nations system support remained nonetheless vulnerable to resource uncertainties. This holds regardless of whether these resources come from within the United Nations system, or from national or other external sources.

94. The evaluations confirm that building effective and sustainable capacity is indeed difficult and demanding work in any country and at any time. The best ways to build capacity are not always clear even to the most experienced advisers.

95. It is clear from the evaluations that the notion of sustainability — which, when and how capacity needs to be maintained — needs a fresh look. This is certainly an inference that can be drawn from the impact evaluation of United Nations system support to building telecommunications capacity in Brazil. In that case, the telecommunications capacity, which the United Nations system supported, was created and grew in the public sector and then was done away with once it was no longer needed. The capacity remained and was used in different forms within the society.

96. The United Nations system's approach may need to move towards codifying a body of sound basic principles and reflecting them in solid practical guidance. One of the lessons suggested by the impact evaluations is that capacity-building may be too broad a term to have sufficient operational significance. This suggests that more attention be paid to analysing specific kinds of capacity building and codifying best practices for each kind. Practices that have been found to work when dealing with poverty eradication may well involve significantly different factors than those associated with governance.

97. Even the limited range of experience examined by these evaluations suggests that it is important for all relevant entities within the United Nations system, as well as interested member States, to monitor their support to capacity-building much more closely to detect required changes and to take appropriate measures. This means that more attention needs to be given to examining experience and current approaches with a view to extracting the

lessons learnt and best practices and feeding them back into current operations. The Council, for its part, should maintain its interest in and monitor the development of a systematic and system-wide approach.

A. Initial follow-up to General Assembly resolution 53/192

98. A seminar is being planned by CCPOQ, just prior to the substantive session of 1999 of the Council, to bring together specialists with extensive operational experience and sensitivity to both strategic operational aspect of capacity building. The evaluations will be used as the basis for developing a draft guidance note to the United Nations system, both at headquarters and the country levels, to ensure that capacity-building and its sustainability are explicitly articulated as a goal of the operational activities of the United Nations system at the country level. It will be followed up through training and country-level missions as determined at the seminar. A new series of impact evaluations, focused, *inter alia*, on capacity-building and poverty eradication is foreseen. The results are to be presented to the next triennial review in 2001.

99. In the short run, as part of its specific follow up of paragraph 37 of General Assembly resolution 53/192, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is disseminating the six pilot impact evaluations of capacity-building, carried out as part of the 1998 triennial review in a publication, which also contains introductory chapters about the capacity-building lessons learned and evaluation issues raised.

100. Seminars are being organized jointly by UNDP and UNICEF, building on their respective experiences and intended to give practical guidance to their staff. A new policy paper on capacity building has been issued by UNDP updating its position. The reports, which were recently submitted to the Council by UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF[63] on progress made in implementing the resolution, do not treat the topic extensively. This is largely due to the relatively brief period between the passing of the resolution and the date when the reports have to be prepared. The reports of the organizations concerned are expected to be able to go into greater depth on this topic in their submission to the substantive session of 2000 of the Council, but it would be premature to say that there is as yet a concerted process under way to make capacity-building and its sustainability explicitly articulated as a goal of technical cooperation provided via the United Nations system at the country level, but the first steps in that direction are being taken.

B. Recommendations

101. The Council may wish to take note of the steps being taken to implement General Assembly resolution 53/192, paragraph 37, dealing with capacity-building, particularly the development of United Nations system guidance on capacity-building with a view to making capacity-building an explicit objective of programme and projects supported by the system, including by revising relevant programming guidelines, by taking fully into account the results of recent impact evaluation studies on the subject, prepared within the context of the 1998 triennial comprehensive policy review and the results of a joint CCPOQ/Department of Economic and Social Affairs seminar on the formulation of suggested guidelines for the system.

[63] See DP/FPA/1999/5, DP/1999/10 and E/ICEF/1999/4 (Part 1).

102. The Council may wish to call on the United Nations system to undertake to ensure that all programmes have a capacity-building objective and have simple explicit indicators of performance as well as baseline data built into such programmes before they are approved.

103. The Council may also want to encourage the United Nations to take further steps to assemble and disseminate all relevant information on capacity-building.

104. The Council may wish to address the subject of the sustainability and adaptability of capacity-building in a variety of development contexts and in response to a range of sectoral, cross-sectoral and technical requirements of recipient countries. In particular, it may want to draw the attention of donors and recipients to the necessity of taking appropriate steps to ensure the financial viability of capacity created in priority areas.

IV. Resources and funding

105. The General Assembly, in its resolution 48/162, defined the oversight role to be exercised by the Council in relation to the work of funds and programmes. By its resolution 50/227, adopted in June 1996, the Assembly further decided (para. 11) that the Council should consider, on an annual basis in the operational activities segment, the overall financial picture of the funds and programmes, including the availability of resources, the priorities and programmes agreed upon in the funds and programmes, the adopted targets and further guidance on priorities, and make recommendations thereon to the General Assembly and the funds and programmes. The Council is scheduled to discuss the subject of funding at its substantive session of 2000. Such a high level of consideration will be timely.

106. In its decision 98/23, the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board adopted an annual funding target for UNDP core resources of $1.1 billion, and stressed the urgent need to achieve annual increases until the target is met (the preliminary data shows that contributions to UNDP core resources in 1998 did not exceed $751 million). The Board reaffirmed the need to reverse the downward trend in core resources and to establish a mechanism to place UNDP core funding on a predictable basis. UNDP was requested to develop a multi-year funding framework that integrates programme objectives, resources, budget and outcomes with objective of increasing core resources. In addition to reaffirming these elements, the Board, in its decision 99/1, also reaffirmed the importance of the development of the multi-year funding framework as an integral element of the funding strategy approved by the Board in its decision 98/23. The first funding session was held, in accordance with paragraph 12 (b) of decision 98/23, at the second regular session of 1999. In order to enhance predictability, and as outlined in decision 98/23, member States were encouraged to provide multi-year pledges as follows: a firm funding commitment for the current year (1999); for those in a position to do so, a firm contribution or indication of the contribution for the following year (in this case 2000); and firm or tentative contribution for the third year (2001) if possible. The interim report on the implementation of the funding strategy for the funds and programmes associated with UNDP, as requested in paragraph 8 of decision 99/1, will be submitted to the Executive Board at its annual session 1999, and a report to the Board at its annual session 2000 on the proposed timing, format and content of the multi-year funding framework, including a clear indication of how the lessons learned in one multi-year funding framework cycle will be fed into the next cycle.

107. As to UNFPA's multi-year planning, management and funding framework, the Executive Board, in its decision 99/5, requested the Executive Director to submit to the Board at its first regular session of 2000 the multi-year funding framework, 2000–2003,

and decided to hold the first funding session as outlined in paragraph 11 (b) of decision 98/24 at the second regular session of 2000 (preliminary data on 1998 contributions to UNFPA core resources shows a decline of about 20 per cent compared with 1997, to a level of $269 million).

108. The UNICEF Executive Board, in its decision 99/8, endorsed the funding target of annual growth in income of 7 per cent, to reach $1.5 billion by 2005, as a challenge for the mobilization of general resources and supplementary funds from Governments and from the private sector and all other donors (preliminary data show that 1998 contributions to UNICEF core resources did not exceed $571 million). The Board also decided that UNICEF should adopt and develop a multi-year funding framework that conceptually integrates UNICEF organizational priorities and major areas of action, resources, budget and outcomes. The Board also requested the Executive Director to propose, at the first regular session of 2000, a plan on the timing of presentation to the Board of the various elements of the multi-year funding framework, with a view to enhancing their interlinkages.

109. The financial stability of the United Nations development system continues to be of serious concern (see E/1999/55/Add.2 for details) while clearly UNDP requires priority attention, in relation to inherent policy and programme implications, the issue should be addressed in the broader framework of the United Nations system's presence, profile and programming at the country level. The system, particularly the funds and programmes, have built an elaborate infrastructure over forty years, which many countries have come to accept and view as an integral to their development effort. Many bilateral donors and Bretton Woods institutions have also been extensively using these facilities. Any dismantling or any serious scaling down for finical reasons would be extremely injurious both to the United Nations system and to the recipient countries. This is an aspect that needs to be borne in mind while considering the future and financial position of United Nations development system. The sweep of globalization, the force and velocity of economic reforms that many countries are implementing are germinating new demands and challenges, and many countries are looking to the United Nations to help cope with them.

110. The steady decline in the core contributions of UNDP carries important policy implications that need careful consideration by the Council in 2000, when resources will be the focus area. There is a need for a strategic decision on this. These extend beyond the future of UNDP itself and embrace the gamut of the United Nations system, including the specialized agencies. Perhaps far more significant, they impinge on the current paradigm of development in which UNDP, along with other funds and programmes, still play a significant albeit diminished role.

111. For an informed consideration of the subject of funding and resource situation of the United Nations development system, it will be necessary to review how the stagnation and decline of resources at the country level is impacting development work. Have any programmes or projects been shelved, scaled down or sidelined? Has it affected the ability of the United Nations to fill critical gaps in mobilizing the critical mass of external resources? What effect is there on implementing goals of global conferences and in achieving the targets of poverty eradication? How is it affecting its credibility and image of the United Nations system as credible and reliable partner? What is the impact in its leverage in relation to other external partners? What can the system collectively do in the field to optimize the cost of programme delivery and administrative expenses? What should be done by the broader membership of the United Nations at the political level to arrest and reverse the situation? And what kind of policy options exist to ensure that the functions assigned to UNDP are carried out at the country level?

112. Besides the issue of and impact on field level, the overall delivery capacity of United Nations funds and programmes has to be considered. For example, with its existing delivery capacity, UNFPA can backstop programmes worth much more than current average of $250 million per annum. Although UNICEF is more comfortably and securely placed than UNDP, there is still a significant gap between the projected demands and expected availability. The adverse impact of enfeebled United Nations programming at the country level on United Nations specialized agencies, particularly smaller ones without field presence, should not be forgotten.

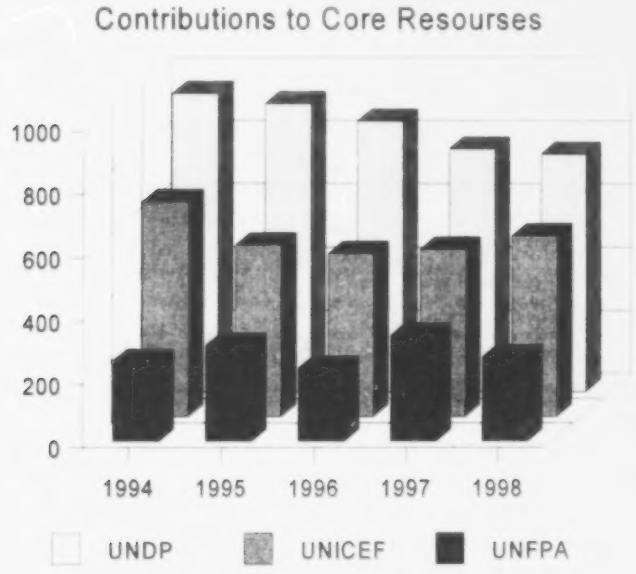
113. Concessionary resource flows to developing countries, instead of moving towards the globally agreed target of 0.7 per cent, are in a state of steady decline at a time of increasing needs and demands. In nominal terms, the members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)/Development Assistance Committee (DAC) as a group (and a number of large donors among them) have not been able to stem the decline in ODA. Net ODA had been rising until 1992, when it reached a record amount of $61 billion. Since then it has declined by one fifth to reach $48 billion in 1997. The Group of Seven Major Industrialized Countries have accounted for practically all of the real fall in ODA in recent years, which fell by 29 per cent in real terms between 1992 and 1997, while real ODA from countries outside this group was practically unchanged. Non-Group of Seven countries now provide 28 per cent of DAC ODA, which is double their share in total DAC gross national product (GNP). In terms of combined aid effort, the overall percentage of ODA in terms of GNP for DAC member countries is 0.25 per cent.

114. The funding and resources situation of the United Nations development system and of the funds and programmes continues to be a matter of grave concern, particularly at a time of growing consensus and convergence on global priorities centered around the time-bound eradication of poverty. In response to Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B, and 52/203, the executive boards of United Nations funds and programmes have developed new funding strategies articulated in decisions 98/23, 98/24, and 99/1 of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board and 99/8 of the UNICEF Executive Board. In particular, the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board, in its decision 98/23, stressed the urgent need to achieve annual increases in the mobilization of UNDP core resources until the target of $1.1 billion has been met and the UNICEF Executive Board, in its decision 99/8, endorsed the funding target of an annual growth in income of 7 per cent, to reach $1.5 billion by 2005.

115. A review of resource trends in operational activities for development within the United Nations system up to 1997 is provided in the addendum to the present report (E/1999/55/Add.2). Addendum table A-1 on contributions shows a steady decline from US$ 5,489.3 million in 1994 to US$ 5,431.3 million in 1997 in total resources channelled for operational activities through the United Nations system. The fluctuation of contributions within the system should be noted, with obvious consequences in programme and project planning and implementation.

116. Contributions to UNDP core resources has steadily declined from its peak of $942.8 million in 1994. In 1995, the decline was almost 4 per cent, in 1996 7 per cent and in 1997 11 per cent (or almost 20 per cent, if compared to the 1994 level). Based on preliminary data for 1998 and estimates for 1999, this negative tendency will continue ($750.9 million in 1998, and $738.1 million in 1999). Not only did this fall short of the $1.1 billion set out in decision 98/23, but the trend continues to be moving farther away from the target rather than towards it. The contributions to UNICEF have also steadily declined in both core and supplementary resources, from its peak of $679.0 million in 1994 to $529.3 million in 1997 (or 22 per cent) to core resources, and from $464.7 million in 1995 to $357.7 million in 1997 (or 23 per cent) to supplementary resources; meanwhile, preliminary data for 1998 shows

an increase to core resources to $570 million which is nevertheless 16 per cent less than in 1994. The contributions to UNFPA (its non-core component is traditionally small) shows relative stability and reached its highest level of $369.5 million in 1997 ($305.0 million in 1995). While clearly UNDP is most affected, the fall-out is by no means confined to it. For example, UNICEF and UNFPA face a growing gap between the resource requirements in terms of their mandates and demands from developing countries and their resource availability on a stable, secure and predictable basis. If viewed in the context of the targets and goals set at the International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit for Children, the paucity of resources available to UNFPA and UNICEF become even starker. Their vulnerability should also be seen in the context of the increasing importance of social issues and of women and children in development.



117. Despite the steady decline in the core resources of UNDP, it remains central to the United Nations development system. It was designed to be the principal development arm of the United Nations, and its financial fragility has serious implications for the United Nations system as a whole given UNDP's special role and, even more importantly, for the developing countries. UNDP's non-core resources have been stable and have shown some increase, but this is due to a large extent to special situation in a few countries. It is the core funds that conform to the traditional character of United Nations development funding and provide the programme flexibility that is needed.

118. While there is as yet no hard empirical evidence, there are indications that the fall of core resources is adversely affecting the capacity of the United Nations system to effectively contribute to national development and its responsiveness to emerging needs. As shown in table B-1 of the statistical addendum, the United Nations system development grants dropped in nominal terms from $4.9 billion in 1993 to $4.8 billion in 1997. However, during the same period, UNDP expenditures financed from government cost-sharing contributions rose from $0.4 billion in 1993 to almost $1 billion in 1997 (60 per cent rise). UNFPA

expenditures have been declining since 1995, from $231.1 million to $214.4 million in 1997 (almost 8 per cent). UNICEF expenditures, after relative stability for several years, also began declining from $803.3 million in 1995 to $672.6 million in 1997 (or 16 per cent). As shown in the same table B-1, the share of the United Nations specialized and technical agencies within total United Nations system grant assistance dropped from 26 per cent ($1.3 billion) in 1993 to about 20 per cent ($1.0 billion) in 1997.

119. The first funding session, for UNDP only, was held at the second regular session of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board (15 April 1999), in accordance with Board decision 98/23, in which the Board also endorsed the funding target of $1.1 billion. In order to enhance predictability, member States were encouraged to provide multi-year pledges, as follows: a firm funding commitment for the current year (1999); for those in a position to do so, a firm contribution or indication of the contribution for the following year (in this case 2000); and firm or tentative contribution for the third year (2001), if possible.

120. So far, the first funding session for UNDP showed mixed results. With respect to volume of resources, UNDP estimates that the total volume of core resources for 1999 would be around $738 million, while the final core resource figure for 1998 was $751 million (both are lower than $766.6 million in 1997). At the same time, there are some indications that a new funding strategy based on the multi-year funding framework, which received the overwhelming support of member States, may work in the future and help to stop the declining trend in the core resources situation. Even now, if one could apply, for instance, exchange rates as they were on 1 April 1997 to the estimated contributions for 1999, their US dollar equivalent would be almost $786 million, or almost 3 per cent increase over 1997. It is encouraging to note that for the first time in seven years, 12 OECD/DAC donors are set to increase their contribution in local currency in 1999 over the previous year. Eight recipient countries have also indicated increased contributions. Another six OECD/DAC members have confirmed that they will maintain their 1998 level of core pledges, and 23 recipient countries have indicated the same.

121. A number of countries made an initial commitment to the new funding strategy of UNDP by announcing their pledges at that time. As concerns all funds and programmes, the new mechanism will be introduced more fully early in 2000, and the Council will receive the results at its substantive session for the year 2000. A total of 13 contributing countries have made indicative contributions for 2000 and all but one of these for 2001. In most of these cases, the amount indicatively pledged for 2000 and 2001 is at least at the same level as that of 1999, if not higher (subject to government or parliamentary approval). While many member countries were unable to provide a multi-year pledge in 1999, some indicated that they were making concerted efforts to revise domestic legislation so that they would be in a position to commit to multi-year pledges in 2000.

122. It was agreed that the interim report on the implementation of the funding strategy for the funds and programmes associated with UNDP will be submitted to the Executive Board at its annual session in 1999, as well as a report to the Board at its annual session in 2000 on the proposed timing, format and content of the multi-year funding framework, including a clear indication of how the lessons learned in one multi-year funding framework cycle will be introduced into the next cycle. As to UNFPA's multi-year planning, management and funding framework, the Executive Board, in its decision 99/5 adopted at that session, requested the Executive Director to submit to the Board at its first regular session in 2000 the multi-year funding framework, 2000-2003, and decided to hold the first funding session at the second regular session in 2000.

123. The UNICEF Executive Board, in its decision 99/8, endorsed the funding target of an annual growth in income of 7 per cent, to reach $1.5 billion by 2005, as a challenge for

the mobilization of general resources and supplementary funds, and decided that voluntary contributions should be announced at the first regular session each year, together with the payment schedules. Governments which are not able to make such announcements at the first regular session should communicate their contribution once their budgetary processes are complete, if possible no later than April. With the aim of strengthening the multi-year funding framework, UNICEF was requested to develop a separate part of the annual report of the Executive Director with analysis of the payments received against payment schedules, the availability of resources, their predictability, as well as obstacles, constraints and future potential introduced by the multi-year funding framework. This analysis would be discussed by the Executive Board at its annual session. The UNICEF Executive Director was also requested to propose at its first regular session in 2000 a plan on the timing of the presentation to the Executive Board of the various elements of the multi-year funding framework with a view to enhancing their interlinkages.

Recommendation

124. The Council may wish to indicate the issues on which it wishes the Secretary-General to focus in preparing the documentation for its substantive session of 2000.

V. United Nations funds and programmes: oversight role of the Council

A. General issues

125. This section aims to summarize and draw the attention of the Council to current issues arising from the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes which require its attention and in relation to which the Council may wish to provide the necessary policy guidance. In taking action on the decisions of the boards of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP, as well as on the annual reports of their executive heads, the Council is fulfilling the mandate given to it by General Assembly resolution 50/227, in which, *inter alia*, the Assembly calls on the Council to consider on an annual basis the overall financial picture and availability of resources, the priorities and programmes agreed upon, the adopted targets and further guidance on priorities and to make recommendations to the Assembly, and the funds and programmes. The presentation and section IV on resources and funding provide an overview in this respect.

126. While the Council has endeavoured to discharge its responsibilities as spelled out by Assembly resolutions 50/227 and 48/162,[64] the Council may wish to assess whether the division of responsibilities between it and the boards is functioning as mandated, particularly on issues in which both have roles to play such as funding and programming. As spelled out in its resolutions 1994/33, 1995/51, 1996/42 and 1998/27, the Council has dealt at various times with the reporting relationship to the boards and funds and programmes, and expects them to raise and bring to its attention issues that they consider requiring the attention of the Council. The Council has, thus, largely left the initiative to the boards and the funds and programmes, and they have responded with some useful suggestions.

[64] Paragraph 16 (c) of General Assembly resolution 48/162 defines the function of the Council in this respect as: to review and evaluate the reports on the work of the development funds and programmes, including the assessment of their overall impact, with a view to enhancing the operation activities of the United Nations on a system-wide basis.

Nonetheless, it might be useful if the Council were to indicate the kinds of issues that it wishes the boards and funds and programmes to consider for eventual transmission to the Council for appropriate action. They may include such issues as funding, target setting, resource mobilization and allocation which have important policy, programmatic and development implications that extend beyond a single organization.

127. There are such areas which are currently under active consideration by the boards, with implications for future programming centered on a resource strategy and the introduction of new programming arrangements and allocation of resources that carry system-wide implications. The recent decision of the boards to move towards multi-year funding is relevant in this respect on account of its potential for increased predictability and levels of funding. Given the interrelatedness of issues and the converging mandates of funds and programmes, the Council may wish to consider the issue of collective coherence. It may also wish to consider how to reverse stagnant or shrinking core funding, and identify measures to ensure coordinated and cost-effective programming at the country level. That, in turn, may even require greater and more focused conclusions of the reports of executive boards to identify areas of convergence, complementarity and contradictions and bring specific issues before the Council.

B. Annual reports of the heads of the United Nations funds and programmes to the Council

128. In its resolution 1998/27 (para. 1), the Council called on the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes to ensure that the heads of these funds and programmes include in their annual reports to the Economic and Social Council, prepared in accordance with Council resolution 1994/33, a thorough analysis of problems encountered and lessons learned, with emphasis on issues arising from the implementation of the Secretary-General's reform programmes, the triennial policy review and the follow-up to conferences so as to allow the Council to fulfil its coordinating role.[65] Both the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board and UNICEF Board requested that these reports be submitted to the present session of the Council, together with comments made by delegations and statements and answers given by the Administrator of UNDP and the Executive Director of UNFPA (information is contained in relevant executive boards' reports).

129. Detailed information on the results of considerations of the annual reports of the executive heads of the United Nations funds and programmes can be found in the relevant reports of the executive boards (E/1998/31/Rev.1 and DP/1999/13).

C. Concise consolidated list of issues

130. In its resolution 50/227 referred to above, the General Assembly indicated that the guidance functions of the Council should be reinforced by giving attention to the objectives, priorities and strategies in the implementation of the policies formulated by the General Assembly, as well as concentrating on cross-cutting and coordination issues. In its resolution

[65] In paragraph 2 of its resolution 1998/27, the Council also requested the executive boards, when considering the annual reports of the executive heads of the United Nations funds and programmes to the Council, to identify specific problems, opportunities and areas in which the Council could provide cross-sectoral coordination and overall guidance on a system-wide basis and to make appropriate proposals in line with Council resolution 1995/51.

1998/27, the Council invited the Secretary-General to arrange for submission to the Council by the executive heads of the United Nations funds and programmes, in consultation with the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), of a concise consolidated list of issues which are central to the improved coordination of operational activities and on which the funds and programmes seek consideration by and guidance from the Council.[66] The requested consolidated list of issues is provided in conference room paper 1.

D. Joint and concurrent meetings of the executive boards

131. An important initiative (called for by the Council in its resolution 1995/51, para. 6), which was also included in the Secretary-General's reform proposals, was the holding of joint and concurrent meetings of the boards of UNDP/UNFPA and UNICEF. In 1999, the joint meetings of the boards of UNDP/UNFPA and UNICEF addressed the following major areas of concerted action for 1999: resource flows, follow-up to international conferences, the resident coordinator system, monitoring and evaluation, use of common indicators, harmonization of programme cycles, common premises and services, UNDAF and the common country assessments, link between development and humanitarian operations. No decisions or conclusions were adopted as a result of joint meetings of the Boards.

E. Joint meetings of the bureaux of the Council and executive boards

132. In April 1999, the bureaux of the Council and the UNDP/UNFPA and UNICEF Executive Boards for the first time held their joint meetings in pursuance of the Council's charter role as the coordinator of activities of its subsidiary bodies. The results of the meeting, along with the outcomes of a series of similar meetings with other subsidiary bodies, will provide an important element in laying the groundwork for the substantive session of the Council. The aim of the first round of meetings was to exchange ideas on how the Council can better discharge its coordinating role and to encourage the boards to increase their cooperation with functional commissions. Based on the experience of this first round of meetings, future meetings will be prepared by taking account of the decisions of the Council at its current session which are of direct relevance to the Boards.

133. The meetings reviewed how the executive boards take into account the work of functional commissions as regards the integrated and coordinated follow-up to global conferences and on cross-cutting issues. It was agreed that one possible tool for facilitating future collaboration could be joint meetings of the bureaux, in particular the bureaux of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Commission for Social Development with those of the funds and programmes.

134. It was noted at these meetings that the Council should identify cross-cutting areas not adequately addressed and provide feedback to funds and programmes. In particular, the contents of the humanitarian activities segment of the Council, as well as issues of the relationship between emergency humanitarian assistance and development activities, was mentioned in relation to paragraph 40 of Assembly resolution 53/192.

[66] In paragraph 4 of its resolution 1998/27, the Council invited the Secretary-General to arrange for the submission to the Council at its annual substantive session by the executive heads of the United Nations funds and programmes, in consultation with the United Nations Development Group, of a concise consolidated list of issues which are central to the improved coordination of operational activities and on which the funds and programmes seek consideration by and guidance from the Council, particularly in regard to the triennial policy review, and to include in the list recommendations, whenever possible

F. Timing of the annual sessions of the executive boards

135. An issue which has preoccupied the Council previously is the timing of the annual sessions of the Executive Boards in relation to the Council's calendar.[67] Scheduling such sessions too close to the substantive session of the Council continues to create difficulties for the timely review of issues to be brought to the Council and for it to discharge its responsibility, vis-à-vis the Executive Boards.[68]

G. Resources[69]

136. In its decision 98/23, the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board adopted an annual funding target for UNDP core resources of $1.1 billion, and stressed the urgent need to achieve annual increases until the target is met. The Board reaffirmed the need to reverse the downward trend in core resources and to establish a mechanism to place UNDP core funding on a predictable basis. UNDP was requested to develop a multi-year funding framework that integrates programme objectives, resources, budget and outcomes with the objective of increasing core resources. The Board, in its decision 99/1, also reaffirmed the importance of the development of the multi-year funding framework as an integral element of the funding strategy approved by the Board in its decision 98/23.

137. As to UNFPA's multi-year planning, management and funding framework, the Executive Board, in its decision 99/5, requested the Executive Director to submit to the Board, at its first regular session of 2000, the multi-year funding framework, 2000–2003, and decided to hold the first funding session as outlined in paragraph 11 (b) of its decision 98/24 at its second regular session of 2000.

138. The UNICEF Executive Board, in its decision 99/8, endorsed the funding target of annual growth in income of 7 per cent, to reach $1.5 billion by 2005, and decided that UNICEF should adopt and develop a multi-year funding framework that conceptually integrates UNICEF organizational priorities and major areas of action, resources, budget and outcomes.

139. WFP has also placed an increased emphasis on resource mobilization in order to strengthen and broaden its financial and resource base, as well as to improve the predictability and reliability of funding. A concerted effort was made throughout 1998 to enhance coordination between headquarters and the field offices in fund-raising. To facilitate this process, new guidelines were prepared in 1998 to strengthen resource mobilization at the field.

140. With all these developments the time has come to decide on the future of the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities, as requested in paragraph 16 of annex I to General Assembly resolution 50/227.

141. The Council may wish to review the resource situation currently facing the funds and programmes, as requested in paragraph 16 of General Assembly resolution 53/192, as well as funding strategies and progress achieved in development of the multi-year funding frameworks, with the aim of reversing the declining trend in core resources and putting funding for United Nations development activities on a predictable, continuous and assured

[67] The annual session of 2000 of the UNDP/UNFPA Board is scheduled for Geneva from 12 to 23 June 1999.

[68] See Council resolution 1995/50, para. 5, in which the Council called for more realistic scheduling.

[69] For more details, see chap. III.

basis, commensurate with the needs of the developing countries. The Council also may wish to make a recommendation to the General Assembly on the future of the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities.

H. Overview of decisions taken, main agenda items of the Executive Board since the 1998 regular session of the Council, and agendas for annual sessions

142. Tables 1, 2, and 3 provide the Council with a quick overview of decisions and main agenda items of the Boards since its last session, as well as the items currently placed on the agendas of the annual sessions of the boards scheduled prior to the substantive session of the Council of 1999.

Table 1
Some of the principal decisions adopted by the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes since the substantive session of 1997 of the Council

	UNDP UNFPA Executive Board						*UNICEF Executive Board*		*WFP Executive Board*	
	3rd of 1998		*1st of 1999*		*2nd of 1999*					
Subjects of the principal decisions	*DP*[a]	*PA*[b]	*DP*[a]	*PA*[b]	*DP*[a]	*PA*[b]	*2nd of 1998*	*1st of 1999*	*3rd of 1998*	*1st of 1999*
Annual report to the Council					X	X		6, 7		17
Funding strategy	23[c]	24	1			5	14	8		
Financial and budgetary matters	20	21, 22					21	2–4	2–5	3–5
Revisions to the financial regulations and rules	18								25, 26	2, 15, 1, 8, 19
Medium-term plan							22			
Programme cooperation (allocation of resources)							15		7–23	6–14
Successor programming arrangements	19		2							
Sector-wide approach						4				
Evaluation reports									6	
The environment issues									1	
Support for reproduction health in emergency situation						6				
Partnership with NGOs										1

[a] UNDP segment.

[b] UNFPA segment.

[c] Reference numbers of the relevant decisions.

Table 2

Some of the principal items on the agendas of the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes since the 1997 substantive session of the Council

	UNDP UNFPA Executive Board						*UNICEF Executive Board*		*WFP Executive Board*	
	3rd of 1998		*1st of 1999*		*2nd of 1999*					
Main agenda item:	*DP*[a]	*PA*[b]	*DP*	*PA*	*DP*	*PA*	*2nd of 1998*	*1st of 1999*	*3rd of 1998*	*1st of 1999*
Policy issues, including follow-up to United Nations global conferences, partnership with NGOs, sector-wide approach, organizational changes etc.						X			X	X
Resource mobilization	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		
Financial, budgetary and adm. matters	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	
Annual report to the Council					X	X	X	X		
Joint meetings of the Executive Boards			X	X	X	X	X	X		
CCF, country programmes and related matters	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
The medium-term reviews and evaluation rep.							X	X	X	
South-South cooperation		X								
Emergency assistance						X				
Organizational and procedural matters						X	X		X	
Common premises					X	X				
Information and procedural strategy			X							

[a] DP-UNDP segment.

[b] PA-UNFPA segment.

Table 3
Main items of the provisional agendas for the 1999 annual sessions of the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes

UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board (14–23 June 1999)	*UNICEF Executive Board (7–11 June 1999)*	*WFP Executive Board (17–20 May 1999)*
UNDP segment	Report of the Executive Director (part II)	Annual reports
Annual report of the Administrator	Positioning UNICEF to meet the needs of children and women in the twenty-first century	(a) Annual report of the Executive Director for 1998
United Nations reform	Ensuring children's rights in Africa	(b) 1998 annual report of the Executive Board to the Council and FAO Council
Evaluation	Progress, challenges and future strategies in basic education	Policy issues
Country cooperation frameworks and related matters	Progress report on the UNICEF strategy and investments in information technology	(a) Food aid and development
Information and communication strategy	Progress report on mainstreaming gender in UNICEF	(b) WFP commitments to women
Resource mobilization	Oral report on implementation of the health strategy for UNICEF	Financial and budgetary matters
Technical cooperation among developing countries	Reports on field visits of Executive Board members	(a) Strategic and financial plan (2000–2003)
United Nations Office for Project Services		(b) Budgetary performance report for 1998
Item 14 (Financial, budgetary and administrative matters)		(c) Financial management improvement programme
UNDP/UNFPA segment		Evaluation work plan, 1999–2000
Internal audit and oversight		Organizational and procedural matters
Field visits		Administrative and managerial matters
UNFPA segment		(a) Report on post-delivery losses
Report of the Executive Director for 1998		(b) Composition of WFP international staff
Work plan and request for programme expenditure authorities		(c) Report on common premises
Information and communication strategy		

I. Recommendations

143. On the basis of the experience gained so far, the Council may wish to assess its approach to exercising oversight responsibilities in the area of operational activities for development as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolutions 48/162 and 50/227 over the work of the executive boards of United Nations funds and programmes. In particular, the Council may wish to strengthen its role in providing necessary policy guidance and assisting in implementing the policy decisions of the Assembly, particularly in the implementation of all provisions of Assembly resolution 53/192 on the triennial comprehensive policy review.

144. To this end, the following are the types of issues and questions that the Council may wish to consider and raise:

- What steps can be taken to ensure that the funding strategies and targets established by the Boards are actually implemented by all Member States in a consistent and equitable manner?
- How can the funding targets be placed in the larger context of resource mobilization efforts relating to the implementation of agreed international targets?

145. The Council may also wish to request that the funds and programmes submit to it through the executive boards analysis of the extent to which the cross-cutting themes and goals emerging from global conferences (on enabling environment, financing, gender, employment, health, nutrition, education, governance and human rights etc.) have been integrated into their programme priorities in a coherent manner. The Council may wish to seek information on specific steps taken by the funds and programmes to develop complementary and collaborative approaches with other United Nations organizations in promoting the implementation of global targets.

146. The Council may wish to take appropriate action on the consolidated list. It also may wish to consider how the reports of the Secretary-General can better contribute to the Council's capacity for monitoring the coherence and impact of the United Nations operational activities. The Council may wish to bear in mind that reports of the Secretary-General take fully into account the work of UNDP and the system as a whole.

147. The Council may wish to take appropriate action on recommendations contained in the reports of the executive heads of the United Nations funds and programmes, as well as on relevant forms and contents of their future annual reports to the Council.

148. The Council may wish to take note of the joint and concurrent meetings of the Boards of UNDP/UNFPA and UNICEF, and to provide guidance on how they can facilitate the preparation of the Council's exercise of providing overall guidance.

149. The Council may wish to address once more the timing of future annual sessions of the boards in relation to its requirements.

150. The Council may wish to recommend to continue the practice of holding joint meetings of the bureaux of the Council and the UNDP/UNFPA and UNICEF Executive Boards, and to recommend that this practice be extended to the bureaux of relevant functional commissions of the Council.